THE SOURCES AND USE OF THE IMAGERY IN APOCALYPSE 12

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by

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Apoc., and Rev. The Apocalypse to John. Abbreviations of other books in the Bible follow those in A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, A translation and adaptation of Walter Bauer's fourth, revised and augmented edition, 1952, by William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), pp. xxvii-xxviii.

Josephus, B. J. The Wars of the Jews.

LXX. The Septuagint.

MT. The Masoretic Text.

NT. The New Testament.

OT. The Old Testament.

Pauly-W. Paulys Real-encyclopaedie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft. Neue Bearbeitung begonnen von Georg Wissowa (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzlersche Verlagsbuchhandlung).

Roscher, Lexikon. W. H. Roscher, Ausfuerliches Lexikon der griechischen und roemischen Mythologie (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1965).

Sibyl. The Sibylline Oracles.

T. Asher and T. Naph. The Testament of Asher and the Testament of Naphtali, from the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs.

ZNW. Zeitschrift fuer die Neuestestamenliche Wissenschaft

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INTRODUCTION

I. Presuppositions

The arguments for the following statements will not be rehearsed because they are available in the commentaries cited below.

A. Date and Situation

The Apocalypse to John was written for the churches in Asia Minor during the tenth decade of the first century A.D. under the persecution by Emperor Domitian.[1]

B. The Author

The writer says that his name is John (1:1,4,6; 22:8), and we will refer to him by that name. The work is not pseudonymous. The author is not the apostle John nor the same man who wrote the Gospel or Epistles. It is possible that the author was John the Elder, named by Papias, but even so, this helps us very little

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[1] R. H. Charles, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John. International Critical Commentary (2 vols.; Edinburgh: T.& T. Clark, first edition, 1920, vol 1 reprinted in 1963, vol 2 in 1959) I, pp. xci-xcvii. (Hereinafter referred to as Rev. I or II). Henry Barclay Swete, The Apocalypse of St. John (hereinafter referred to as Apoc.) (3d ed.; London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1909), pp. lv-cvi. See also Lyder Brun, "Die roemischen Kaiser in der Apokalypse, ZNW 26 (1927), pp. 128-151, and Roland Schuetz: Die Offenbarung Johannes und Kaiser Domitian (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1933), pp. 14-32.

in understanding the author. John, our author, is known by and knows the churches in Asia Minor to whom he writes. His familiarity with the OT and with Jewish traditions as well as his peculiar brand of Greek attest that he was from a Jewish background and spoke Hebrew. It is possible that he came from Palestine to Asia Minor.[1]

Further, because of the complexity of the book and its myriad interrelationships we will assume that John was intelligent and knew what he was writing and had a consistent theology.[2]

C. Structure

Along with the assumption about the intelligence of the author, we also assume that the book was all written by one author.[3] There are several traditions and blocks of material worked together in the Apocalypse. Our understanding of the process involved is closest to Bousset's fragment-hypothesis--John wove together a number of pieces of material which had not previously been joined in this way[4]--and not in agreement with any proposed working together of two

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[1]Charles, Rev. I, pp. xxviii-1. Wilhelm Bousset, Die Offenbarung Johannis. Meyer's Kommentar zum Neuen Testament 16 (6th ed.; Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1906) Hereinafter referred to as Off. Joh.), pp. 34-49. See also Feine-Behm-Kuemmel, Introduction to the New Testament, trans. by A. J. Mattill, Jr., from the 14th rev. ed. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1966), pp. 321-31.

[2]Of the recent studies leading to this conclusion, see Traugott Holtz, Die Christologie der Apokalypse des Johannes. Texte und Untersuchungen, 85 (Berlin: Akadamie Verlag, 1962); and Mathias Rissi, Time and History, trans. by Gordon C. Winsor (Richmond, Virginia: John Know Press, 1966).

[3]Swete, Apoc., pp. xlvi-liv. On the so-called liturgical sections, see Gerhard Delling, "Zum gottesdienstlichen Stil der Johannes-Apokalypse," Novum Testamentum 3(1959), pp. 107-37.

[4]Bousset, Off. Joh., p. 113.

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apocalypses,[1] or a reworking of a Jewish apocalypse.[2]

The structure of the visionary section of the book (chapters 4:1-22:5) is best explained by Bornkamm's analysis: three stages of increasing intensity, with each state containing one of the series of sevens, 6:1-8:1; 8:2-14:12; and 15:1-22:6.[3] As we will see in the Appendix, this analysis gives us a helpful starting point, but it does not answer all the questions about the complex structure of the book.

D. The Text

The text of Revelation 12 as given by Nestle-Aland is the basis for this study.[4] The scope of the text discussed is Rev. 12:1-17. Verse 18 connects

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[1]M. E. Boismard, " 'L'Apocalypse'ou 'Les Apocalypses' de Saint Jean," Revue Biblique 56 (1949), pp. 507-41. Boismard's suggestion makes some sense, but it seems to me that such a complex hypothesis is not necessary to explain the features of the Apocalypse.

[2]Eberhard Vischer, Die Offenbarung Johannis: eine juedische Apokalypse in christlicher Bearbeitung (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs' sche Buchhandlung, 1886). See See discussion below, Chap. 2:I:D.

[3]Guenther Bornkamm, "Die Komposition der apokalyptischen Visionen in der Offenbarung Johannis," in Gesammelte Aufsaetze Band II: Studien zu Antike und Urchristentum. Beitraege zur evangelischen Theologie, Band 28 (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1959), pp. 204-222; first appeared in ZNW 36 (1937), pp. 132 ff.

[4]Novum Testamentum Graece, ed. by Eberhard Nestle, re-edited by Erwin Nestle and Kurt Aland (23rd ed.; Stuttgart: Privileg. Wuertt. Bibelanstalt, 1957). The text edited more recently by Kurt Aland, Matthew Black, Bruce M. Metzger, and Allen Wikgren, The Greek New Testament (Stuttgart: Wuerttemberg Bible Society, 1966) varies at only one place: in verse 3, the reading megas purros is inverted, and this changes the meaning not at all. For the complete textual apparatus see H. C. Hoskier, Concerning the Text of the Apocalypse (2 vols. London: Bernard Quaritch, Ltd., 1929). For a discussion of some of the textual questions in Rev. 12, see Josef Schmid, Studien zur Geschichte des griechischen Apokalypse-Textes. Muenchener Theologische Studien. Zweiter Teil (Munich: Karl Zink Verlag, 1956), pp. 71, 99, 103, 199, 208, and 221.

clearly to the following chapter and has little to do with the previous verses. Rev. 12:1-17 is also marked off by the presence of the woman--she is in these verses and nowhere else in the Apocalypse.

II. Purposes and Disclaimers

The Apocalypse was written by a man whose Christian faith was apparently formed in a Jewish context. He was writing to churches in Asia Minor, a crossroads of the Hellenistic world with its religions and syncretism. While many members of these churches were likely of Jewish background also, they lived in a culture that was alive with many currents besides that of Judaism. One purpose of this study is to see how the writer of the Apocalypse, his faith nurtured in one culture, relates this faith to the different culture into which he writes. The twelfth chapter is the one passage on which there is widest agreement that John used extra-Jewish traditions, so it should be a good place to focus our attention.

Looking at our table of contents, one could imagine that we are off on a hunt for as many parallels as possible to Rev. 12. This is not the case; indeed most of the work in this study has been a process of eliminating proposed parallels. Instead of searching for the parallels, we are looking for the particular traditions which influenced the author and which he made use of, in order to see how he deals with them.

Many sources have been held up as the one behind Rev. 12, and we do not have any new proposals to add to the list. We hope rather to bring some clarity of method into the task of deciding among all the previous suggestions. Because of the varied nature of these proposals and their many different areas of

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concern, I have not tried to bring all of the history of research together in one place; it is rather worked into the different chapters on particular suggested backgrounds.

It is not my hope to show myself an expert in each of the various fields considered. Nor do I pretend to have covered all of the primary sources which might be connected with the separate proposals; such a project would require a lifetime. My attempt has been rather to examine all the primary sources cited by the experts and those proposing a background for Rev. 12. In only two cases, those of astrology and the Caesar-cult, have I gone significantly beyond the sources cited. This is not to say that I am bound by the interpretations of those scholars who refer to the sources; for instance, in the case of the Apollo myth, I believe that I have presented a more careful history of its development than has been available till now.

The suggestions about Rev. 12 have usually been of two types. The first (see Chapters 3, 4, 7, and 8:I, II, and III) has been from men who have been working heavily in one particular religion or culture and want to show that it has similarities to Rev. 12. The other type has come as a response to the myriad possibilities presented by those of the first type. Faced with all of this testimony from experts that so many cultures had features similar to Rev. 12, they despaired of deciding among them all and asserted that since these similar tales or myths existed in several cultures we do not need to know from which particular culture John took his material (Chapter 8:VI). My hope is that by bringing to bear a sane method of comparing the primary sources involved, I will be able to make distinctions between the various suggestions and perhaps to isolate the particular tradition which John used.

An earnest search has been made for all the interpretations of Rev. 12 on the basis of other cultures. However we do not hope to have covered all possible suggestions. An expert in a field not yet mined for similarities to the NT will likely make another proposal about Rev. 12 before much time has passed. This present work should provide a method for assessing such future proposals and a standard by which they might be judged.

Apart from the brief description of the chapter immediately below there is no special section set aside for the exegesis of Rev. 12. Such exegesis occurs throughout the paper in relation to the different mythologies and especially in relation to the OT and Judaism. In the course of the work all of the facets of Rev. 12 are touched on, at least I believe that to be the case, however it is not my intention to provide another commentary on each phrase. My interest in each particular of the chapter is determined by whether or not it aids us in understanding the way in which John uses his sources.

III. Structure of Revelation 12

On first reading there are four distinguishable parts to the chapters:

A. vv. 1-6, the woman with child and the dragon,

B. vv. 7-9, Michael and the dragon,

C. vv. 10-12, the voice from heaven,

D. vv. 13-17, the dragon's pursuit of the woman.[1]

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[1] In this I follow Ernst Lohmeyer, Die Offenbarung des Johannes. Handbuch zum Neuen Testament, 16, 2d ed., edited by Guenther Bornkamm (Tuebingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1953), pp. 94-108. The analysis which follows, however, diverges widely from Lohmeyer's. (Hereinafter referred to as Off. Joh.)

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The woman is present in sections A and D, but not in the middle two. Michael is present only in part B. Starting from these observations, one could suspect that there are distinct sections in the chapter which are only loosely joined together. These four sections are related in several ways other than the consistent presence of the dragon, however. The third section contains references to each of the other parts. The role of the Messiah, from part A, is referred to by "the blood of the lamb" (v.11);[1] the fall of the dragon is celebrated in v.10, and the dragon's pursuit of the woman is explained by his "great wrath" (v.12).

Another and obvious connection between sections A and D is the repetition of the content of v.6 in v.14; every element of the former is found also in the latter: the flight, the place, the nourishing, and the 1260 days = 3-1/2 times. From this repetition we can conclude that the author has inserted sections B and C into the story of the dragon and the woman. As we shall now see, this insertion is anything but clumsy.

As we look at the inter-connections between the verses and patterns, the division of the chapter looks slightly different than on first reading. First of all we find in vv. 1-9 double alternation between the woman and the dragon as subjects. In vv. 1-4 there is a description of each, first the woman, vv. 1-2, then the dragon, vv. 3-4. Both of these descriptions begin with a sign appearing in heaven (sēmeion ōphthē en tō ouranō), followed by how each of them appear ("clothed in the sun," "great red") including a special mention of their heads

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[1] See below, chapter 2: 1, B.

("twelve stars," "ten heads and seven diadems"), and then for each there follows a series of three clauses describing their activity.

Woman (v.2)	Dragon (v.4)
And she was pregnant,	(1) And his tail swept down one-third of the stars,
and she cried out,	(2) And he threw them onto the earth,
and she was in anguish for delivery (tekein)	(3) and the dragon stood before the woman who was about to deliver (tekein).[1]

At the end of the three statements about the dragon there follows the phrase, "in order to devour the child when she gave birth." It seems clear that the author has followed a pattern in his descriptions of the two, and only on this last phrase has he broken the pattern, or, perhaps, stretched it. This is not necessarily evidence of his awkwardness; it is more likely that he wanted the emphasis to fall on this phrase since it sticks out of the pattern noticeably and falls at the end. Indeed this phrase gives the reason for the juxtaposition of the woman and the dragon in vv. 1-4 and for their action in the rest of the chapter.

The second alternation between the woman and the dragon beings in v.5, and in this case the statements have to do with the activity of each in connection with the dragon's attempt to devour the child. Again there are interesting similarities between the two sides of the alternation.

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[1]The translation is mine, made to follow as closely as possible the Greek word order.

Birth of a son who will "rule with an iron rod"; (v.5a)	(1)	Michael's war on the dragon; (v.7)
the child is taken to heaven to God's throne (v.5b);	(2)	the dragon has no place in heaven; (v.8)
the woman goes into the wilderness (v.6);	(3)	the dragon fall onto the earth (v.9).

In relation to the first pair, it is at least possible to argue, by comparing v.7 with v.11, that Michael is intended as a substitute for Christ. In v.7 Michael defeats the dragon, but in v.11 the victory of the faithful is rooted in the "blood of the Lamb." This pairing of the birth of the child and the activity of Michael would strengthen this possibility.[1] Note also that in the third element on the dragon's side, the description is a bit longer, and the verb "to fall" is repeated three times. The form ebl$\bar{e}$th$\bar{e}$ is picked up later in the chapter.

The alternation between the woman and the dragon is given up in vv. 10-12. There is however an almost hidden alternation within v. 10 on the one hand and vv. 11-12 on the other; this can be observed by starting with the references to the fall of Satan in v. 10b and v.12b (hoti ebl$\bar{e}$th$\bar{e}$, hoti kateb$\bar{e}$). From there, one can see that v. 10a and v. 11 both speak of the triumph which is the reverse side of Satan's defeat: v. 10a speaks of the effect of the triumph as the coming of the kingdom of God and v. 11 speaks of the ground of the victory as the blood of the lamb and the work of witness. We have then alternating references to the victory of Christ and to the fall of Satan. However the first half of v. 12 does not

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[1] See below, Chap. 2: III, C and Chap. 9.

fit into this scheme; it is rather a call for joy and woe, the one to heaven and the other to earth, inserted just before the last element in this quartet. Again we might suspect that the element which breaks the pattern should receive the emphasis. In this case, the emphasis falls on the ambiguous nature of the victory over Satan in that it brings about Satan's attack on the earth. The 'woe,' highlighted by the break in the pattern, is perhaps also related to the three woes mentioned in 9:12 and 11:14. The third woe is expected at the sounding of the seventh trumpet; however that trumpet comes and goes and there is no mention of the third woe. It seems likely that this third woe is precisely the wrath of Satan on the earth described in 12:12.

The alternation between the woman and the dragon, found in vv. 1-9, is resumed in verses 13-17: the dragon is the subject of vv. 13, 15, and 17, while the woman is the focus in vv. 14 and 16. In v. 13 the action of the dragon is picked up from the vv. 1-12, including another occurrence of ebl$\bar{e}$th$\bar{e}$. As we have seen, v. 14 picks up the action of the woman from v.6. The two are related in the dragon's pursuit of the woman.

The pursuit is described in vv. 15-16 in the story of the dragon's spewing out water after the woman (v. 15) and the woman's deliverance by the earth (v. 16).

This failure of the dragon's attack on the woman is the cause of the dragon's continuing anger and the reason why he turns his attack away from the woman to the "rest of her seed."

The form of vv. 13-17 is pure narrative: there is no pause for identification of the figures or for explication of the meaning. The break in this pattern

again falls at the end, in v. 17, where the object of the dragon's attack is specified as those who bear witness to Christ. And for the third time the variation in the pattern makes sense as the element which John wished to emphasize. The three points which receive such emphasis are the dragon's opposition to the child (v. 4), the ambiguous nature of the victory which issues in the dragon's attack on the earth (v. 12), and the attack of the dragon on the followers of Christ (v. 17).

The form of the alternations throughout the chapter is of two alternations in vv. 1-9, two in vv. 13-16 and a final word about the dragon in v. 17. Into the middle of this is put another alternation between Christ's victory and the fall of the dragon (vv. 10-12) which explains the significance of the whole chapter: the dragon's wrath on the churches is the result of the victory by the blood of the Lamb. Into this inserted alternation there is yet another insert, v. 12a, coming just before the end of the pattern. While this break in pattern is different from the other two breaks--vv. 4 and 17 come at the ends of their patterns--it is quite similar to the way John handles the two series of sevens which have preceded ch. 12; in both sevens there is an insertion just before the end of the series.

The center of this chapter, the fulcrum of the balance, is vv. 10-12, which, as we saw, contains elements from each of the rest of the parts of the chapter. On one side is the double alternation between woman and dragon, beginning with the woman; on the other side is also a double alternation, this time beginning with the dragon, with one extra return to the subject of the dragon. This one extra, v. 17, is the action of the dragon which opens up the twelfth chapter to the action which follows it.

CHAPTER ONE

METHODOLOGY

This chapter will be, for the most part, a statement of the obvious. The reason for spelling out what is plain is that by doing so we might prevent ourselves from overlooking it when convenient to do so. As we shall see, the obvious has been frequently ignored.

One observation we must make in order to make clear the presupposition of the guidelines we suggest: we are not concerned with proof, but with evidence and probability. "Proof of motives, causes, and meanings in history always lies beyond the historian."[1] The suggestions on method are designed to give aid on the questions of how to assess the evidence we have and how to determine the probability of influence.

Our primary concern is the question of how to decide whether John used sources of traditions in Rev. 12, and if he did, which ones were most likely used. Perhaps some of the suggestions made could apply to any text in which there is a question about its use of several possible traditions.

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[1] Erwin R. Goodenough, Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period, vol. VIII: Pagan Symbols in Judaism. Bollingen Series XXXVI (N.Y.: Pantheon Books, 1958), p. 220.

The term 'source,' used throughout the work refers to a body of material with which the author worked. The term does not refer to the ultimate origin of the material but to the form in which it was available to John. It may refer to oral tradition or to traditions generally available--"in the air"--as well as to written material. It would be nice if we could assume that John used exclusively written sources and that we have access to all of them. Of course, neither of these assumptions would be true.

In assessing the evidence and probability, I offer nine guidelines.

I. A Clue in the Text

The text in question, the supposed borrower, must give some clue that there are blocks of material worked together. This clue is usually a seam visible in the structure of the text; an unnecessary repetition, a lack of clarity, an unclear connection or transition can give away these seams. Without such clues we are on impossible grounds for trying to decide what sources were used.[1]

II. The Simplest Explanation

From the rest of the Apoc. it is beyond argument that John stands within and makes use of the traditions of the OT, later Jewish literature, and early Christianity. Since we will try to explain Rev. 12 on the simplest basis

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[1] See Hermann Gunkel, Schoepfung und Chaos in Urzeit und Endzeit. Eine religionsqeschichtliche Untersuchung ueber Gen. 1 und Ap. Joh. 12 (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1895), p. 256; and Carl Clemen, Primitive Christianity and its Non-Jewish Sources, trans. by Robert G. Nisbet (Edinburgh: T.& T. Clark, 1912), p. 17, quoting from Oldenberg, Indien und die Religionwissenschaft

possible, i.e. using the fewest sources possible to explain the features of the chapter, if everything in Rev. 12 can be explained on the basis of Jewish and Christian traditions, then there is no basis for an argument that he used any other tradition.[1]

III. The Hellenistic World

If some features of Rev. 12 are not explained from Jewish or Christian traditions, then we need not hesitate in seeing the Apoc. as a part of the world of Hellenistic syncretism.[2]

IV. Existence of the Source

Traditions used to explain Rev. 12 must be shown to have existed in a form similar to that which John is alleged to have used. It is indeed unfortunate that we do not have complete evidence from the period in question, but it is no real help to engage in speculation about which traditions must or should have existed in a form not now attested. Such speculation is subject to no control and so, however tempting, it must be avoided.[3]

This means that the conclusions arrived at are confessedly subject to change should new evidence be found -- something like another Qumran or

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[1]Clemen, Ibid.; and Bousset, Off. Joh., p. 349.

[2]Hans Dieter Betz, "On the Problem of the Religio-historical Understanding of Apocalypticism" in Journal for Theology and the Church 6: Apocalypticism, ed. by Robert W. Funk (New York: Herder & Herder, 1969), pp. 136, 138, 155.

[3]Gunkel declared his independence from this limitation, because other and perhaps more important forms of the myth likely existed although not attested. See Zum religionsgeschichtlichen Verstaendnis des Neuen Testaments (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1910), p. 38. Also see below in Chapter 8:II.

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Nag Hammadi. But this is only another way of saying that we have to do with evidence but not proof.

V. Time and Place of the Source

The tradition supposed to have been borrowed must be shown to have existed in geographic and chronological proximity to the borrower, in this case the Apocalypse. This is an observation which is often made and almost as often honored in its violation.[1] We will try to stick to the rule that we cannot use a later text to explain an earlier one; if our arrangement of the evidence chronologically produces only hopeless confusion then, but not before, we can try to determine some other arrangement of existence and influence.

This observation has two corollaries. The first is that we are not interested in "parallels," religio-historical or otherwise. The term 'parallel' can imply that two similar traditions arose in separate cultures, and that the parallel streams of tradition never touch. We are interested rather in streams that join and mingle and influence each other. Because of this possible implication of the word 'parallel' we will do our best to avoid using it.

The second corollary is that we are interested primarily in the form of the traditions in question during the first century A.D. We are not interested, for purposes of this study, in the earliest or original form. The only exception to this is when that earliest form helps us to understand the tradition as it appeared in the Apoc.

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[3]See, for instance, Clemen, Primitive Christianity, p. 19.

VI. Adaptation

It is not necessary, in order to argue that borrowing took place, to have a complete matchup of all details in the source and the borrower; we must allow for adaptation by the borrower.[1] However the major features of the source must be present in the borrower, and explanations must be given as to why adaptations were made. The question of which features are major and how many of them it takes to argue for a borrowing are questions which seem impossible to answer in general terms; they must be worked out in each individual case. In the case of Rev. 12 the question becomes, to a degree, one of comparison; whichever suggested source has the most similarities to Rev. 12 must be taken the most seriously -- assuming historical and geographic proximity. However if the one most similar to Rev. 12 has several features lacking in our chapter, then it is not automatic that it is one of the sources used by John.

VII. Modes of Dependence

In relation to the OT as well as the other possible sources, it is not enough to indicate the presence of something borrowed. The way in which it is borrowed must be specified. In the use of the OT, for instance, we must decide whether we have a word-for-word quote, a use of a motif or concept from a passage

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[1] Albrecht Dieterich, Abraxas. Studien zur Religionsgeschichte des spaetern Altertums (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1891), pp. 118-20, apparently felt that such a matchup was necessary, and, in order to achieve it, changed both Rev. 12 and the form of the myth of Apollo. Allowance for such adaptation is made by Gunkel, Schoepfung und Chaos, pp. 178 ff, Bousset, Off. Joh., pp. 354-58, and Pere Allo, Saint Jean L'Apocalypse (3d. ed.; Paris: Libraire LeCoffre, 1933), p. 190. See the discussions below in Chapters 4 and 5.

or an OT figure of speech, a reminiscence of or allusion to an OT passage, figure, or event, a use of combination of OT passages, a paraphrase of an OT text, or an exegesis of or conclusions drawn from a passage.[1] These kinds of dependencies can be established by the use of the same language or a high degree of similarity between the concepts or figures used in both source and borrower. Again, we must leave the "high degree of similarity" undefined and work it out in particular cases.

Another mode of dependence or usage of the OT by the NT is that of an OT passage or complex providing more than one motif or phrase for a NT text. In such a case we can ask whether the OT passage served to help organize or structure the NT text and whether it was a conscious formative influence in the mind of the borrower. This structural borrowing involves us in the intention of the author which is discussed under the next point.

In the commentaries on the Apoc. there are many references to the OT which do not fall into any of the above categories; there is no indication that the supposed borrower was dependent on or intended to refer the reader to the OT texts cited by the commentators. Most of the suggestions of this type are understood best as evidence that a certain concept or image was probably available to John within the Jewish tradition. This kind of evidence can involve linguistic peculiarities (e.g., the use of the article with an infinitive (12:7) as an Hebraic pattern) as well as concepts and images (e.g., the dragon and Michael). Under this notion of dependence, which is non-literary, we must try to distinguish

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[1]This list is drawn from Gunkel, Sch. u. Chaos, pp. 243-45, and Louis A. Vos, The Synoptic Traditions in the Apocalypse (Kampen: J. H. Kok, N. V., 1965), pp. 20ff.

between an unreflective usage of a common tradition, such as the linguistic pattern just mentioned, and a deliberate choosing of a motif or image out of the tradition, such as Jesus as the Christ. It is under this non-literary but deliberate usage of an available tradition that almost all of the suggestions about the extra-Jewish traditions fall.

VIII. Intent of the Author

In any borrowing or dependence, the intent of the author must be understood. If there is no reason why a source might have been used, then the argument for its usage is very weak. This criterion becomes especially important in a situation where we must decide between two sources, both in existence close to and being comparably similar to the borrower. When one of the proposed sources can be understood as useful to the purposes of the author, then that source must be given preference. The intent of the author may be in terms of apologetic, polemics, and/or as a part of his general purpose. In the case of Rev., the intent of John could be related, among other things, to his opposition to the Roman Empire, his Christology, or his concept of victory. At the same time we must allow, and this is a part of the circular process of interpretation, that the proper understanding of a particular passage, such as Rev. 12, can transform our understanding of the whole book. At any rate, the understanding of the part must be related to the understanding of the whole.

The meaning of a passage is not clarified by simply isolating the sources behind it; it is found rather in seeing how the traditions are put together and in asking why the author brought them together. This point is closely related

to Jonas' polemic against the "alchemy of ideas" - in which two ideas somehow automatically fuse and become yet a third idea. We must ask rather for the driving force that led the author to relate different beliefs and for the internal reasons for the adaptation of ideas.[1]

Our presupposition that the author of the Apoc. is intelligent and knew what he was doing means that we are not predisposed to look for the work of a final redactor handling sources which he did not understand properly -- although we do understand them -- but including them anyway. The use of a source of tradition must make sense in terms of the thought and intent of the borrower.

IX. Reasons for Borrowing

There are two possible kinds of uses for sources taken over. The first is an affirmation of the beliefs or concepts in the source used. This could be done with a slight adaptation for a different time and place but not with a major change from the source. An example of this kind of borrowing would be John's use of OT traditions, such as those of God and Satan.

The second possibility is nearer to polemics than to affirmation. In this kind of takeover the beliefs and hopes of the source are neither denied nor ridiculed, rather they are claimed by the author for his own tradition. One example of this is in Paul's speech on the Aeropagus, Acts 17:22ff. Another example would be available if we could show that John takes over the myth of Horus, or Apollo,

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[1] Hans Jones, Gnosis und spaetantiker Geist, 1. Teil (2d. ed.; Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1954), pp. 73-4. Also Betz, "Apocalypticism," p. 137.

or the Gnostic redeemer myth and claims that the hopes connected with one of these are fulfilled in Christ -- Christ as the true Horus or true Apollo. Under this second possibility we might expect to find that the source used has an effect on the user; for instance, if the Gnostic redeemer myth is used then the author's own understanding of Christ is likely to be changed as he related Christ to the redeemer.

Other possible relations between two sets of beliefs do not seem to lend themselves to borrowing, at least by John. One of these would be the simple equation of gods, such as that found in Plutarch's On Isis and Osiris, where no attempt is made to establish the superiority of one over the other.[1] There is no example of this within the NT.

Another possible relation would be a complete denial of the existence of another god or gods and ridicule of the hopes attached to them.[2] If this were an author's understanding of another religion, there would be no reason for him to take over any of the traditions connected to it.

A word may be in order here about the possible relations between John as an author and John as a visionary. In this study we are working with the processes of authorship, but this does not imply that John could not have been a visionary as well. My presupposition is that a man's visions are made up of material out of his own past; the unique part of the visionary experience is the way in which

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[1]This mode fits well with what Nock calls "adhesion;" A. D. Nock, Conversion, Oxford University Press, 1969, first published in 1933), p. 7.

[2]This would be one way to understand what Nock, Ibid., talks about as "conversion."

the remembrances of that past are reshaped and put together in different ways. Thus it is possible that John's exposure to the OT and to any of the other mythologies helped to shape his visions. There is the additional question of how a man who has had a vision translates that vision into a literary form: I would hold that in this process the visionary could still make use of all of the tools of careful craftmanship--including the usage of materials which perhaps played a formative part in his vision.

CHAPTER TWO

OLD TESTAMENT, JUDAISM, AND CHRISTIAN TRADITIONS

There are a number of possible ways to organize the discussion of Rev. 12. Following it through verse by verse, commentary style, would cause me unnecessary repetition and the reader undue confusion because of the way that the chapter has the dragon and the woman and the flight woven in and out through its entire length. We could also isolate each individual motif and discuss them one after the other. This possibility has the disadvantage of segmenting a chapter full of action into a series of snapshots. The alternative I have chosen is to try to pull together the actions and motifs connected with a particular figure in one or two places so that some of the flow of the chapter is allowed to show through. The major portion of the chapter has to do with the woman and the dragon, so this is the heading of our central section. Some of the aspects of the woman need to be clear before the conflict with the dragon can be understood; it is easy to separate out the passages dealing with the woman as mother and her child, and these are dealt with in the first section. The remainder of the events in the chapter fit nicely under the opposition of Michael and the Dragon.

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I. The Woman and the Child

In the judgement of most commentators, the woman in Rev. 12 is a personification of Israel or Zion or perhaps the people of God under both the Old and New Covenants.[1] In support of this several passages are usually cited to show that Israel was portrayed as a woman.

A. Israel as a Woman

These texts must be broken down more carefully.

1. Israel as a woman without reference to a child.

a. Israel as a harlot.

This group of texts speaking of Israel's unfaithfulness (Jer. 3:6-10; Ezk. 16:4b; and Hos. 2:2) help us not at all in understanding Rev. 12.

b. Israel as the bride of God.

These passages (Is. 54:5; Hos. 2:19f) likewise provide no help since there is no mention of child or pregnancy and since there is nothing in Rev. 12 about the Woman as the bride of God.

c. 4 Ezra 9:38-10:59

Here Israel is portrayed as a supernatural woman. There are no birth pains; indeed she mourns for her dead son, who is apparently the Temple which has been destroyed. Further, both Box and Eissfeldt assign this work to the period

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[1] See for example Swete, Apoc., p. 147; Charles, Rev. I, p. 315; Lohmeyer, Off. Joh., p. 99; Holtz, Christologie, pp. 104-107; and Pierre Prigent, Apocalypse 12: Histoire de l'Exegese, Beitraege zur Geschichte der biblischen Exegese 2 (Tuebingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1952), pp. 141-143.

after the death of Domitian, so it is even weaker as evidence for a tradition within Judaism for a woman like the one in Rev. 12.[1]

2. Israel as a woman with birth pangs.

One group of texts within this group is of no help: those which portray the pain as the result of iniquity (Jer. 4:31; 13:21; 22:23; Is. 13:8; 21:3; Mi. 4:10). In none of these is there any fruit of the labors, only the pains.

There are three passages which refer to the labors of Israel as leading to a birth.

a. Is. 66:7

Is. 66:7 refers to the coming of the Messianic times as the coming of a birth to Israel. The LXX even has language that is similar to Rev. 12: eteken arsen, with the same neuter form of the word for male. Virtually all of the commentators see this passage as quite similar to Rev. 12.[2] However, the emphasis in Is. 66 is on the ease of the birth and the absence of the pain. Birth is given not to a Messiah but to a son who is the whole nation and who is also referred to as sons. So this passage does show that John had access to a tradition of Israel as a woman giving birth to a male child at the time of the coming of salvation. However, the

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[1] G. H. Box, in The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English, Vol. II: Pseudepigrapha, ed. R. H. Charles (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913; reprinted 1966), p. 552. Otto Eissfeldt, The Old Testament. An Introduction, trans. by Peter R. Ackroyd from the 3rd German edition (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), p. 626.

[2] Bousset, Off. Joh., p. 99; Holtz, Christologie, p. 102-3; Prigent, Apoc. 12, p. 142.

differences, on the pains and the result of the birth, rule out John's dependence on this passage. The language (huion arsen, 12:5) is closer to another OT passage, Jer. 20:15.

b. Is. 26:17-27:1

Rissi suggests that this text is the "bud which blossomed out in Rev. 12." The author of Rev., according to Rissi, used the LXX version, and there are four similarities between the two passages: 1) a woman with pain at the birth of the Messiah (12:12; 26:20), 2) wrath coming after a short time (12:12; 26:17), 3) the community is hidden (12:6; 26:20), and 4) a dragon is found in both (27:1).[1]

Charles, on the other hand, sees a less impressive similarity, namely between the language of the Hebrew text of 26:17 and Rev. 12:2 describing the pains of birth.[2]

Whether the author has used the Hebrew or the LXX text of Is. is of some importance because the two are significantly different, particularly in 26:18. The MT does not yield itself to Rissi's interpretation at all: the result of the birth pains is nothing, and the confession is made that Israel has not brought salvation on the earth. The LXX changes this meaning to the opposite: en gastri elabomen kai etekomen pneuma sōtērias sou epoiēsamen epi tēs gēs. The Hebrew negative, bal, is dropped, the punctuation is rearranged, and the result of the birth is that the people have created "the spirit of salvation on the earth." This difference is

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[1]Mathias Rissi, Time and History, trans. by Gordon C. Winsor (Richmond, Virginia: John Knox Press, 1966) pp. 36-7.

[2]Charles, Rev. I, p. 317.

such that it drove the editor of the Goettingen Septuagint to substitute ouk in the place of sou, to make it conform with the Hebrew text, with no textual support whatsoever.[1]

On the basis of Charles' arguments, it seems to me highly unlikely that John used the LXX.[2] This does not rule out the possibility, though, that the LXX reflects accurately a Hebrew text which was available to John. Assuming that this latter was the case, we still have some problems with Rissi's thesis.

There is no mention of a child's being born; birth is the metaphor for creating the spirit of salvation. It would take a remarkable set of similarities to overcome this difficulty.

Further, the set of verses which Rissi picks out, 26:17-27:1, has nothing to recommend its being read as a unit. Instead it falls into three parts: vv. 16-19, 20-21, and 27:1. The last of these three is also the first of a series of four passages which are begun with the phrase, "in that day."

One of the similarities asserted by Rissi is that both texts have the motif of the wrath after a short time. This phrase covers over real differences. In Is. 26, the wrath is from God and directed against the earth; in Rev. 12, the wrath from which the woman hides is that of the dragon.

So Is. 26:17ff, assuming the LXX, provides an instance of Israel with birth pangs resulting in salvation. Yet the rest of the similarities suggested by

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[1] Joseph Ziegler, ed., Septuaginta. Vetus Testamentum Graecum Auctoritate Societatis Litterarum Gottingensis. Vol. XIV, Isaias (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1939).

[2] Rev. I, pp. lxvi ff.

Rissi do not hold up. As a result there is no strong reason to suppose that John made conscious use of this passage.

c. I QH 3:7-12

The last passage of those under Israel as having birth pains has to do in fact with the pains of the Qumran community. The comparison of Rev. 12 with I QH 3:7-12 began with an article by Dupont-Sommer and depends to some extent on his translation.[1] The Psalmist compares his sorrows with those of a ship sunk at sea and a city under siege, and then, at more length, with a woman in travail. However in the pains of birth there is born a Wonderful Counselor who will deliver every man from pain. Three lines later comes a mention of the pains of the woman pregnant with the Asp. Dupont-Sommer speaks of this passage as the mother of the Messiah opposed to the mother of Belial. There has been considerable discussion of this proposal. Braun reviews the arguments and points out rightly that one of the crucial questions is whether or not the child born is the Messiah.[2] This question turns on the phrase "wonderful counselor" from Is. 9:5. The strongest objection to the child's being the Messiah is that there is no evidence that this phrase was ever used within Judaism as a title for the Messiah. Delcor argues that this absence is

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[1] A. Dupont-Sommer, "La mère du Messie et la mère de l'Aspic dans un hymne de Qoumrân," Revue de l'histoire des Religions 147 (1955), p. 177. And The Essene Writings from Qumran, trans. from the French by G. Vermes (Cleveland: Meridian Books, The World Publishing Company, 1962), p. 208.

[2] Herbert Braun, Qumran und das Neue Testament (2 vols.; Tuebingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1966) 1, pp. 314ff.

due to the rabbis' having excised all such references to the Messiah as Wonderful Counselor in order to counter the claims of Christians on the title.[1] This is an argument from silence, and it does not overcome the absence of evidence for this phrase as a Messianic title.

The translation of Dupont-Sommer seems governed by his reading of the conflict of the mother of the Messiah and the mother of Beliar. The translation of Lohse is, in my judgement, the more accurate one. There the result of the birth pains is a male characterized as a "wonder of a counselor," and instead of this one delivering men from pains, a man escapes (entrinnt, wyipālēt) out of the waves of pain.[2] With this understanding of the text, there is no reference to a Messiah.[3]

Even though the evidence weighs against any concept of a Messiah in 1 QH 3:7-12, there are still more similarities to Apoc. 12 within this passage than in any other we have considered. Here, as opposed to the others, there is both the birth pains and their result in a male child. Prigent, however, overstates the case by drawing too many similarities. He asserts that in both texts the women

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[1]M. Delcor, Les Hymnes de Qumran (Hodayot) (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1962), p. 120.

[2]Eduard Lohse, ed. and trans., Die Texte aus Qumran. Hebraisch und deutsch. (Munich: Koesel-Verlag, 1964), p. 121. For another non-Messianic interpretation and translation, see Schuyler Brown, S. J., "Deliverance from the Crucible" N.T. Studies 14 (1967-68), p. 255, 257.

[3]William Hugh Brownlee, The Meaning of the Qumran Scrolls for the Bible (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), pp. 272 ff, does not question the use of the title "Wonderful Counselor" nor its being a Messianic title. However, he interprets it to refer to the community nurtured by the psalmist, and not to an individual Messiah.

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have other children besides the Messiah and receive persecution from evil forces.[1] Neither of these elements are found in I QH 3:7-12 except in the translation of Dupont-Sommer. He translates bekūr as "first-born," while the better translation is "im Ofen" or "im Schoss."[2] This reference to the first born, however, is the only part of the passage which hints of the birth of more children. The only argument which I can see for the woman's being attacked by forces of evil would rest on a misinterpretation of "the arrows of the Pit" in 3:16-17. These arrows are not sent after the woman or child, and not even Dupont-Sommer makes such a claim. Prigent does not make either of these arguments about the other children or the persecutions; he simply asserts their presence without supporting arguments. The best arguments which I can muster do not support his assertions however.

Even with the real similarities between the two, which we have noted, the differences between them are such that it is impossible to argue that John is dependent on I QH 3:7-12. The communities are different even though both are represented as a woman, the child is different -- one the Messiah, one not -- and the serpent does not pursue the woman in I QH 3. The most that can be argued is that it is possible that the two texts make use of the same tradition.[3] If they share a common tradition, it is difficult to decide which author has altered it in which way. If the tradition was similar to the form in Qumran, then John must have

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[1]Prigent, Apoc. 12, p. 142.

[2]Braun, Qum. u. d. N.T., p. 316; and Lohse, Texte, p. 121.

[3]Delcor, Hymnes, p. 124.

changed the identification of both Woman and Child. What seems more likely is that the common tradition was the Mother Zion/Israel giving birth to a male child, as in Is. 66:7, and the Psalmist of Qumran claimed the Mother for Qumran while John claimed the Child as Christ. This is pure conjecture, however. All that we have is that there was within Judaism, at least one sect of Judaism, the notion of the holy community as a woman having birth pains which led to the birth of a particular male child.

B. The Child as the Messiah (12:5)

1. His birth.

There are two passages which seem to have been understood as telling of the birth of the Messiah.

a. Mi. 5:1-3

This text tells of a ruler to come out of Bethlehem, and his birth is to be the sign for his brethren to return to Israel. He will then make Israel secure and great. The identity of his mother is not immediately clear. "She who labors gives birth (yōlēḏah yālāḏāh; tiktouses teksetai)" could possibly refer to a personified Bethlehem, but it seems far more likely that it is the particular human mother of this ruler. The place of the mother in Mi. 5 is not as important as in Rev. 12, and there is no reason to suppose that John was consciously using this passage. Mi. 5 does give evidence of birth pains in connection with the birth of Messiah in the tradition which was familiar to John.

b. Is. 7:14

There is more in Is. 7:14 to suggest that John made use of it. The LXX has language which is very like that of Rev. 12: sēmeion. idou hē parthenos en

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gastri heksei kai teksetai huion. The sign, the woman's giving birth to a son who was seen, at least by the early Church, as the Messiah, together with the agreement in language make a strong case for John's having made some use of this text. Swete says that John "can scarcely have failed to remember" this passage, and Lohmeyer goes further to say that Is. 7:14 was the pattern (Vorbild) for John's description of the woman and child in 12:2.

There are some differences which must be noted: the mother in Is. 7 is not Zion or Israel, the word for the woman in Rev. 12 is gunē, not parthenos, and the two signs are somewhat different -- one is in heaven, and the other is an earthly birth; one is an appearance, the other an action. These differences lead me to conclude that this passage was not the pattern for the woman and the child in Rev. 12, but the similarities, particularly those of language, are too many to put down as coincidence. I am convinced that John consciously alluded to this passage in Is. 7 in order to identify the son born there, the Messiah, with the son in Rev. 12. The allusion is no more than that since there is no evidence for the passage's appearing in the rest of Rev. 12.

What we have in the evidence examined to this point is an almost perfect division: those texts which speak of a particular child-Messiah being born do not speak of a personified Israel as mother, and those which speak of a personified Israel do not envisage her bearing a particular child. There are two exceptions to this. Is. 66.7 however emphasizes the miraculous ease of the birth, and I QH 3:7-12 does not have to do with Israel but Qumran. We conclude that there is no precedent for John's description of a personified Israel as giving birth to the Messiah.

The ground was broken and the seed planted for such a concept, but there is no evidence of its growth prior to the Apocalypse.

2. The characteristics of the Messiah.

a. The dragon to devour him.

There is one instance of the inhabitants of Zion being devoured by a dragon, Nebuchadrezzar (Jer. 51:34; in LXX 28:34). I can find no hint , however, of the devouring of the child of the personified Israel.

b. The male son.

This somewhat redundant phrase (huion arsen) has attracted the notice of several commentators. One of the more interesting speculations is that of LeFrois in which the two words refer to separate things, the one to an individual and the other to a collective.[1] It is much more believable to see here a reflection of a Hebraic language pattern such as that in Jer. 20:15 (bēn zākār). The LXX reflects the same pattern in at least one place, Tobit 6:12 (hiuos arsen). There is no reason to believe that John used either of these texts.[2] They are evidence that the double masculine in 12:5 is possible in Greek when the writer uses language patterns from Hebrew.[3]

c. Rule with an iron rod.

This seems to be a quote from the LXX of Ps. 2:9. There the reading is: poimaneis autous en hrabdō. The MT does not seem to be a possible source because

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[1] Bernard J. LeFrois, S.V.D., The Woman Clothes With the Sun (Apoc. 12) (Rome: Orbis Catholicus, 1954), p. 164.

[2] In Jer. 20:15 the day of birth is cursed, and in Tobit 6:12, in the S codex, the absence of children male or female is the subject.

[3] Charles, Rev. I, p. 320; Bousset, Off. Joh., p. 338, Swete, Apoc., pp. 150.

the word corresponding to poinamein is a form of the root resh ayin ayin, which means 'to break' instead of 'to rule.' Since there is evidence that John did not use several of the patterns of the LXX,[1] it is still within the realm of possibility that John had a Hebrew text like that which the LXX used and translated it in a similar fashion.

At any rate the use of Psalm 2:9 is plain, and the reason for its use is obvious. The phrase in Ps. 2:9 refers to the King (2:6) who is declared God's son (2:7). This text, Ps. 2:7-9, is taken up into NT christology in the baptism story, Mk. 1:9-11 and parallels, and is used twice more in the Apoc.--once to refer to Christ (19:15) and once to those who will share in Christ's glory (2:27). In Rev. 12:5 this quote serves to identify the child as the Messiah and as Jesus.

Most commentators agree with this,[2] but a couple go even further and suggest that Ps. 2:7 may also have played a part in the formation of 12:5.[3] Ps. 2:7 puts together the enthronement of the king with his birth, figurative birth at least. This connection could provide a clue toward solving the much discussed puzzle

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[1]Charles, Rev. I, pp. lxvi ff.

[2]Charles, Rev. I, p. 320; Bousset, Off. Joh., p. 338; Swete, Apoc. p. 151; Prigent, Apoc. 12, p. 145; Joseph Sickenberger, "Die Messiasmutter im 12. Kapitel der Apokalypse, "Tuebinger Theologische Quartalschrift 126 (1946), p. 390.

[3]Austin Farrer, The Revelation of St. John the Divine (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1964), p. 141. Altfrid Kassing, O.S.B., "Das Weib und der Drache," Bibel und Kirche 15:4 (1960), p. 115.

about why a Christian author would refer to his Lord by mentioning only the birth and being taken away.[1] The Christ in Rev. 12 is the son of God of Ps. 2 and the important things about that figure are his enthronement-birth and his ruling over nations. There is one more piece of evidence which lends support to the thesis that John had the whole of Ps. 2 in mind, and not just the phrase quoted in 12:5. Rev. 11:8 contains a partial quote of the first verse of Ps. 2.

d. Caught up to God.

The verb harpazein is not used elsewhere in the NT to describe Jesus' ascension or exaltation. This strange usage is another part of the puzzle of how a Christian writer can refer to the work of Christ in this fashion. The verb in question is occasionally used in the NT in the sense of being enraptured: of Paul in 2 Cor. 12:2, 4; of Philip in Acts 8:39; and of those who are alive at the second coming in I Th. 4:17. Swete points out that these usages are very similar to those of the verb analambanein which is used of Jesus' ascension in Acts 1:2,11, 23, and I Ti. 3:16.[2] In this connection, the use of the word to apply to Christ's ascension does not seem impossible, and the usage does not indicate, as Vischer asserts, that there was haste and a virtual defeat.[3]

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[1] G. H. Dix, "Heavenly Wisdom and the Divine Logos in Jewish Apocalyptic," Journal of Theological Studies 26 (1952), p. 1. Hermann Gunkel, Schoepfung und Chaos p. 180. Eberhard Vischer, Die Offenbarung Johannis: eine juedisch Apokalypse in christlicher Bearbeitung (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs' sche Buchhandlung, 1886), pp. 22-3.

[2] Swete, Apoc. p. 151; see also Charles, Rev. I. p. 321.

[3] Vischer, Off. Joh., p. 23.

Charles agrees with Vischer and Gunkel that this chapter could not have been written originally by a Christian.[1] Part of their reason is that Christ's work would not be summarized in this way by one of his followers. In fact, the work of Christ is summarized in a similar fashion in John 16:28 and I Ti. 3:16.

These summaries and our discussions of Ps. 2:7-9 and the verb harpazein do not take away our surprise at the brevity with which Christ's work is handled and the absence of any mention of his death. They do take away the right to deny out of hand that this could have been the product of a Christian's pen. However, the death of Jesus plays an important role in the rest of the Apoc., and its omission here must lead us to conclude that there were some special circumstances, some structures or sources with which he was working so that he did not allow himself a completely free reign in describing the life of Christ; he obviously chose certain elements and eliminated others in order to fit together the pieces with which he was working. To repeat, we can understand the fitting of these pieces as the work of a Christian author.[2] It is not necessary to conclude that they were assembled first by a Jewish apocalyptist. And in the section after next we will see that such a conclusion can not be supported by the evidence from Judaism.

C. The Woman as Mary

1. The Roman Catholic Tradition

Many scholars within the Roman Catholic tradition have argued that the heavenly woman is the Virgin Mary. Feuillet reviews this discussion and observes

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[1] Rev. I, pp. 299 f.

[2] Fitted in the manner of fragment hypothesis as suggested by Bousset, Off. Joh. pp. 113-16.

"that many writers forget that the application of the text of Apocalypse 12 to Mary is far from being the oldest explanation of the passage; neither is it the best attested explanation; furthermore it is replete with difficulties." He goes on to argue that "any ecclesial exegesis of Apocalypse 12 should not exclude a Marian meaning, as long as this latter element remains restricted to the secondary and subordinate importance."[1] It is certainly possible in this way to argue that the mother of the Messiah in Rev. 12 is open to being tied to the doctrines of Mary. There is, however, nothing in Rev. 12 which gives a hint that John had in mind the particular mother of Jesus or that he was aware of the notion of the Virgin Birth.

2. The Matthean Birth Story

In both Rev. 12 and Matthew 1:18 - 2:23 there is a flight after the birth of the Christ. Vos sees linguistic similarities in the two passages around the phrases referring to the pregnancy and to the birth of a son. He acknowledges, however, that these similarities are due to a probable usage of Is. 7:14 by both John and Matthew. He sees additional similarities. "In Rev. 12:4 the dragon stands in front of the woman to devour the child, and in Matt. 2:3 f. Herod shows the desire to "devour" the baby Jesus. In Rev. 12:5 the child is protected by God, as is also the case in Matt. 2:13, and the woman's flight into the wilderness, Rev. 12:6, may have been suggested by the flight of Mary, Joseph, and Jesus into Egypt, Matt. 2:13."[2] The comparison between the dragon and Herod is very strained, and

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[1] André Feuillet, The Apocalypse, trans. by Rev. Thomas E. Crane, S.S.L. (Staten Island, N.Y.: Alba House, 1964), pp. 115, 117.

[2] Fitted in the manner of the fragment hypothesis as suggested by Bousset, Off. Joh., pp. 113-16.

the dissimilarities are not overcome by playing on the word 'devour.' The flight to the wilderness and the protection of the child by God, although indirect in Matthew, are indeed present in both accounts. However the differences in the handling of these motifs are significant. The flight in Mt. 2 is with the child and for the protection of the child. In Rev. 12 the child is protected apart from the flight, and the mother is alone in the flight.

These differences together with the absence of the dragon in Mt. make any borrowing from this gospel very unlikely. It is possible that John and Matthew are both dependent on a common Christian tradition of a flight after the birth of Christ. However, because the two handlings of the flight are so different, it is impossible to reconstruct what the tradition might have looked like.

D. A Jewish Apocalypse ?

The description of the Messiah is at the core of the argument by Vischer that Apoc. 12, minus v. 17 and part of v. 11, was a part of a Jewish apocalypse. His contention is that this concept of a Messiah does not fit within Christianity but that it does fit in Judaism. The evidence he proposes for this is from the tractate Berachoth, II, of the Jerusalem Talmud, a text which tells of a Messiah born at the time of the destruction of the Temple and then hidden away. This has a similarity, according to Vischer, to the sequence of events in Rev. 11:15-12:17.[1] The fact that there is no mention in the rabbinic account of a dragon, woman, or flight would argue against any similarity even if it could be shown that this portion of the Talmud goes back into the first century A.D. Also, on the question of whether

[1]Vischer, Off. Joh., pp. 25-27.

John intended a chronological succession between chapters 11 and 12, see the Appendix. There is yet another difficulty with Vischer's argument which he admits and which Bousset presses hard. There is nothing within Judaism which would compare with the double coming of the Messiah in the Apoc. Vischer has to postulate, without evidence, that there should have been within Judaism such a concept, but it does not arise until later.[1] It is difficult to imagine a Jewish Messianic hope in which the Messiah comes once, brings his followers into persecution, and goes back to heaven to return again. This unlikely sequence is scarcely understandable apart from the experience of the followers of Jesus who had to deal with the historical given that the one they claimed as the Messiah had been taken away.

One argument used in favor of Rev. 12 as an originally Jewish document is made by Charles in his assertion that the passive role of the Messiah in Rev. 12 is like some Jewish expectations.[2] However, none of the texts which Charles cites, which are in the historical proximity of the Apoc., speak of the Messiah as hidden or passive in anything like the same way as Rev. 12. In 2 Baruch 29:3 the Messiah will begin to be revealed but his presence is not yet envisioned, so the categories of active and passive do not apply. In 4 Ezra 7:20 ff the Messiah will be revealed and live for four hundred years, yet nothing is said about his living. This is strikingly different from the brief stay of the Messiah in Rev. 12 and his being caught up to God. The Messiah in I Enoch 90:37 ff comes after the judgment, so again there is no real comparison to the first coming of the Messiah in Rev. 12.

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[1] Ibid., and Bousset, Off. Joh., p. 348.

[2] Charles Rev. I. pp. 308-9.

While John 7:27 reflects a Jewish belief that no one will know where the Messiah comes from, this is not the same as Rev. 12. John of the Apocalypse has nothing to say on the earthly origins of Jesus, but it is because he is concerned with a wholly different set of questions; there is nothing to indicate that a mystery about his origin is of any importance.[1]

Since there is no precedent for the Messiah in the form of Rev. 12 within Judaism, any attempt to understand Rev. 12 as a part of a Jewish apocalypse is doomed from the start. And, as we saw in a previous section, such an attempt is unnecessary.

E. Wisdom and Logos

There is yet one suggestion within the realm of Judaism which we must consider in connection with the mother and child. Lohmeyer argues that there was a belief within Jewish circles of Wisdom's coming at the end of time, finding no place to dwell, and fleeing to an unknown place; also there was a myth of Mother Wisdom and her divine Child, Logos, who was also the Messiah.[2]

There are several parts to this which must be unravelled. First we take up the coming of Wisdom at the end of time. There is only one piece of evidence for Wisdom's descending, not finding a place, and returning to heaven, and that in 1 Enoch 42:2. This text has nothing to do with the end of time; rather it is placed

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[1] One of the arguments for a Jewish prototype of 12:1-5, 13-17 is the one by Charles Rev. I, pp. 300-305, 308) that John translated these verses from Hebrew or Aramaic. This is picked up by Prigent, Apoc. 12, pp. 131, 147, and Holtz, Christologie, pp. 90-91. However Charles withdraws this thesis, with convincing reason, in his introduction, I, p. xci.

[2] Lohmeyer, Off. Joh. pp. 104-105.

between two sets of astronomical secrets. The other texts Lohmeyer calls on have to do either with Wisdom without her coming or going (Proverbs 1:20-22; Wisdom 8:30; 9:4) or with the absence of Wisdom among men as a sign of the folly of men. The two texts in the latter category (4 Ezra 5:9 ff; 2 Baruch 48:36) have to do with the end time, but Wisdom is not clearly personified, rather it is placed in parallel with intelligence, and there is no mention of Wisdom's descending from heaven. So Lohmeyer's myth of Wisdom descending and leaving at the end of time is his own creation by conflation.

The second element in Lohmeyer's chain is the relation between Wisdom and Logos. G. H. Dix, on whom Lohmeyer relies, finds a remarkable similarity between the Logos-Warrior of the Wisdom of Solomon and the Logos-Messiah who makes war in Rev. 19. He has to admit, though, that within the Book of Wisdom there is no relation between Wisdom and Logos and there is no identification of the Logos and the Messiah. Dix also discusses the passage in I Enoch 42:1 ff and goes to some length to explain why the author did not make Wisdom to be the mother of the Messiah. All of it is an argument from silence and does not change the fact that Wisdom is not described as the Messiah's mother.[1] Both Dix and Lohmeyer make use of Philo at a crucial point -- the relation of Wisdom to Logos as mother to child (de fuga et inventione 20 or 108 f). Both present this statement of Philos's as though it were a consistent part of Philo's presentation. They neglect to mention that in the same essay the Logos is said to be the fountain of Wisdom (de fug.

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[1]Dix, "Heavenly Wisdom," pp. 4-8.

18 or 97). There seems to be a wealth of formulations of the relation between these two in Philo. The conclusion to which Wolfson comes is "Wisdom, then, is only another word for Logos, and it is used in all the senses of the term Logos."[1] H. F. Weiss sees this equation of Wisdom and Logos as the result of Philo's taking the figure of Wisdom from the OT and Palestinian Judaism and that of Logos from Hellenistic Judaism and fusing the two strains together by identifying the two figures.[2] So Philo does not stand as a witness that Wisdom was elsewhere thought of as mother of the Logos in Judaism, even though in one of a welter of statements he says just that. Also, neither Lohmeyer nor Dix make any suggestion that there is an identification of Logos and Messiah in Philo.

The result of this is that every link in Lohmeyer's chain is broken: there is no evidence for Wisdom's coming to earth at the end of time and hiding, there is no substantial evidence for Wisdom as the mother of Logos or the Messiah, and no evidence, apart from Christianity, for the equation of Logos and Messiah.

One suggestion related indirectly to the figure of wisdom is that by Simone Petrement. In Nag Hammadi and in the Gospel of the Hebrews, she finds the Holy Spirit as Mother and as the Church. She argues that the woman in Rev. 12 must be understood as the Holy Spirit who is also the Church. She continually capitalizes the words "Saint-Esprit," and this is a symptom of the way in which she

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[1]Harry Austryn Wolfson, Philo, (2 vols.; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1947), I, p. 258.

[2]Hans-Frierich Weiss, Untersuchungen zur Kosmologie des hellenistischen und palaestinischen Judentums (Berlin: Akadamie-Verlag, 1966), p. 265.

seems to read later trinitarian disputes back into the Apocalypse. There is, she argues, no instance of the celestial Jerusalem giving birth to the Messiah, but she can offer no instance of the Spiritls giving birth to the Messiah to support her argument. She speculates that such a birth by the Spirit might have come about through the influence of Isis and Ishtar; no evidence is given for this speculation either. Finally she pulls in Lohmeyer's arguments on the woman as Wisdom, and she seems to hold that his arguments apply equally as well to the Spirit and the Church. Then she asserts that there is no real difference between saying that the mother of the Messiah is Wisdom or that she is the Spirit; however, she prefers the latter.[1]

There is no reason to deny her arguments that the spirit(s) and the church are closely related within the Apocalypse. But that is the only piece of evidence which she offers, and that alone is not enough to argue that the woman in Rev. 12 is the spirit. Also, as we have seen, Lohmeyer's arguments about Wisdom do not provide her with the foundation which she needs.

II. The Woman and the Dragon

We turn now to the conflict which, in its different locales and motifs, occupies the majority of verses in the chapter. We will organize this into three parts: the celestial appearance of the two figures, the character of the dragon, and the flight of the woman from the dragon.

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[1]Simone Petrement, "Une suggestion de Simone Weil à propos d'Apocalypse XII, New Testament Studies 11 (1964-65), pp. 291-96.

A. The Celestial Appearance

Most commentators agree that the situation of the visianary in Rev. 12 is on the earth looking at the stars rather than in the middle of the heavens looking around.[1]

To characterize an occurrence in the sky as a sign (sēmeion) is not strange to the OT (Gen. 1:14; 9:12 ff -- the rainbow) or the NT (Mk. 8:11; Mt. 16:1; 24:3).[2] Rev. 12 shows no evidence, however, of using any of these passages. If the word sēmeion in Rev. 12 was taken from a particular OT text, it was most likely from Isa. 7:14. The passages listed in this paragraph show only that it was not unusual to apply this word to celestial phenomena.

1. The Woman (12:1)

Several passages have been suggested as the background for, or as parallels to, the heavenly Woman of Rev. 12. In the Song of Solomon 6:9 (10) the beloved is as fair as the moon and as bright as the sun; this metaphor for a woman's beauty is not at all similar to the astral vision in Rev. 12. In Ps. 103 (4):2 God is said to be clothed in light. Here the idea is a bit closer to Rev. 12 in that the light is an indication of majesty.[3] Yet the majestic person is God, and the light would not likely be the source or the impetus for the complex of sun, moon, and stars in ch. 12. In Wisdom 7:29 the personified Sophia is said to be

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[1] Swete, Apoc., p. 147; Bousset, Off. Joh., p. 335; Lohmeyer, Off. Joh., p. 98. Charles, Rev. I, p. 314 does not decide between the two.

[2] See the brief discussion of these texts in Swete, Apoc., p. 147.

[3] So says Swete, Apoc., p. 147.

brighter and better than sun, constellations, and light. Here the heavenly lights are not used to indicate majesty but are put on a step below the figure of Wisdom. For the above reasons, none of these texts provide any precedent for the woman in 12:1, and I can see no reason why John would have made use of them.

There are two instances of the sun and moon with either eleven stars or twelve rays. In Gen 37:9 the sun is Joseph's father and the moon his mother. In T. Naph. 5:3-4, Levi, as the sun, has twelve palm branches, and Judah, as the moon, has twelve rays under his feet. Both of these provide evidence that the sun and moon and twelve stars were familiar within the Jewish tradition, but still there is no text in which all these astral bodies are related to one figure. In all probability the twelve stars refer to the twelve constellations of the zodiac.[1] It is also a good guess, even though it does not seem to be subject to proof, that these twelve also refer to the twelve tribes of Israel.[2]

Beyond this evidence for what was in the Jewish tradition available to John there is nothing to recommend the possibility that John had in mind either of these passages in particular.

2. The Dragon (12:3a, 4a)

The celestial appearance of the dragon is even more devoid of precedent within Jewish tradition than that of the woman. There are instances of Satan,

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[1]Thus Charles, Rev. I, p. 316; Bousset Off. Joh., p. 336; and Franz Boll, Aus der Offenbarung Johannis. Hellenistische Studien zum Weltbild der Apokalypse. Stoixeia, Heft 1 (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1914), p. 100.

[2]Swete, Apoc., p. 147.

the accuser, in God's court (Job 1:6-7; Zech. 3:1 ff), of Satans in heaven (I Enoch 40:7) or located at one particular level of the heavens (2 Enoch 7:1; Ascension of Isaiah 7:9 ff), and of the fall from heaven by Satan (Lk. 10:18; Jn. 12:31).[1] In none of these instances is Satan described as a celestial phenomena to be seen, and in none is there any mention of a dragon.

In Rev. 12:4 the dragon is said to sweep down one-third of the stars with his tail. The figure 'one-third' is due to John's making this number correspond to the series of thirds destroyed at the sounding of the seven trumpets (Rev. 8-9:19). The motif of the stars falling because of the action of the beast has a similarity to Da. 8:10, in which the horn of the ram knocks down some of the hosts of heaven and some of the stars. Since, as we will see, there is good evidence that John did use Daniel, it is possible that he took a cue from this passage and had his dragon make use of his tail on the model of the ram's horn. While this is possible, I can see no added meaning that this reference would have gained, and I am certain that if John were trying to direct his readers attention to Da. 8:10 he would have done so more effectively. Da. 8:10 serves only to show that within the apocalyptic tradition John was not unique in having a beast knock down stars.

3. Their Action (12:6, 13)

Taking the chapter as a whole it appears unusual that celestial figures, perhaps intended as constellations,[2] should become mobile and active. The only thing remotely similar to this which I know of is in Sibyl. V:512 ff, in which

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[1] On the fall from heaven, see below under Michael and the Dragon.

[2] See below in Chapter 3 and the Excursus.

there is a war of stars at the end of time with constellations doing battle with each other and with Lucifer riding on the back of Leo. However, this Oracle seems to be later than the Apocalypse, so that if dependence is argued, the Oracle would have to be dependent on the Apocalypse.[1]

4. Astral Themes in Judaism

We have argued that John did not use any of the Jewish texts with astral motifs in forming Rev. 12 -- there is nothing to compare with the woman or the dragon. We should make clear however that John was not breaking new ground in his use of astral concepts and images. It is not necessary to go through all of the evidence within Judaism, but we will mention a few texts to indicate the spread of the phenomenon.

The righteous dead are thought of as stars (Da. 12:3; 2 Baruch 51:1-10; 4 Ezra 7:97), the zodiac is used (2 Enoch 12:1-3; 30:5-7), horoscopes are found in Qumran[2] as well as a strong hint of a theologized notion of the influence of heavenly bodies (I QH 12:8-11). The clearest evidence of all about the presence of astralism in Judaism is found in I Enoch. One section (72-82) is entitled "The Book of the Heavenly Luminaries". Through the first three sections Enoch claims to have wisdom, that is astronomical secrets, that come from God (33-6; 41; 43-4; 60; 71; and 93). Also the orderliness of the stars is presented as an example of faithfulness

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[1] See below under Michael and the Dragon for a discussion of the war in heaven.

[2] John M. Allegro, "An Astrological Cryptic Document from Qumran", Journal of Semitic Studies 9 (Aug. 1964), pp. 291-94. J. Carmignac, "Les Horoscopes de Qumran", Revue de Qumran 18 (April 1965), pp. 199-206.

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to be followed (2: 41; 43-4). A discussion of the ways in which astral motifs might govern certain of the visions in I Enoch is neither possible within a short space nor necessary to our point. It is plain that within Jewish traditions astronomy and astrology were well known.[1]

The evidence for the use of astrology among the rabbis in the first century A.D. is not so clear. If it could be shown that the rabbis of this period were concerned with the subject, it would not change our point, it would only broaden our evidence. The problem of dating the rabbinic sources complicates our problem. As Scholem points out, many of the words of later mystics appear under the names of Johanan ben Zakkai, Eliezer ben Hyracanus, and Akiba ben Joseph.[2] In his study of Johanan ben Zakkai, Neusner admits the need for critical tools to test the reliability of rabbinic witnesses, but goes ahead without these tools and takes all that is attributed to a man as actually coming from him. Even so, all that he can say of this rabbi is that there were some elements of mysticism in his thought--no indications of astrology.[3] Scholem finds his earliest material in the Greater Hekhaloth, some parts of which may go back as far as the second century A.D.,

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[1] On this subject see D. S. Russell, The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic. 200 B.C. - A.D. 100 (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1964), pp. 230 ff.; and Erwin R. Goodenough, Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period, vol. 8, pp. 195 ff. Goodenough discusses astralism in both literature and the visual arts.

[2] Gershom G. Scholem, Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism New York: Schocken Books, 1961), pp. 41-2.

[3] Jacob Neusner, A Life of Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai. Ca. 1-80 C.E.; Studia Post-Biblica VI (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1962), pp. 2-3, 98.

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and in the Sefer Yetsirah, written somewhere between the third and sixth centuries A.D. Of this latter work, he writes that it is "the earliest extant speculative text written in the Hebrew language".[1] Neusner can point to some evidence for an interest in astrology among the Babylonian Jews; again the earliest he cites are from the second century A.D.[2]

However we might speculate backwards on the basis of these indications of mysticism and astrology, it would remain our speculation. There is no evidence for the use of astrology by the rabbis before the time of the Apocalypse.

B. The Character of the Dragon

1. Seven Heads and Ten Horns (12:3)

This is certainly the most striking visual characteristic of the dragon. Neither the seven heads nor the red color of the dragon have any precedent which I can find. The Pistis Sophia, c. 66, has a seven-headed monster, but the work is about a century later than the Apocalypse. Ps. 74:14 does have a many-headed monster, and this is as close as we can come to the seven heads of Rev. 12.

Wallace has suggested that the beasts in the Apoc. depend on the OT figure of Leviathan, and that this figure is in turn derived from the Canaanite

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[1] Scholem, Jewish Mysticism, pp. 45, 74-6.

[2] Jacob Neusner, A History of the Jews in Babylonia. I. The Parthian Period; Studia Post-Biblica IX (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1965), pp. 120, 130-33. See also Salo Wittmayer Baron, A Social and Religious History of the Jews, vol. 2 (2d ed.; New York: Columbia University Press, 1952), pp. 15-17; Saul Liebermann, Greek in Jewish Palestine (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1942) pp. 97-99; Liebermann, Hellenism in Jewish Palestine (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1950), p. 130.

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serpent. In Ps. 74:14, with its many-headed monster, he finds a reflection of the seven heads of the Canaanite serpent.[1] It seems possible that the seven heads of the dragon in Rev. 12 come from a tradition within Judaism, originally inspired by the Canaanite serpent, of a monster with seven heads. However this can be no more than a guess, because there is no evidence of this seven headed monster in the material available to us.

The ten horns seem a deliberate usage of Da. 7:24 in which the ten horns are equated with ten kings of a world power. This reference to Daniel might well serve to indicate a political dimension to the dragon in Rev. 12 as well.[2]

2. The Enemy (12:4, 7-9)

The beast as the enemy of God and of the people of God has ample precedent within the OT (Is. 27:1; Job 40:15-24). More specifically, this beast is often connected to the water as in Rev. 12:15 (Ps. 89:10; Job 26:12-12; T. Asher 7:3). And still closer, perhaps, to Rev. 12 there are several passages in which this water monster is equated with the political power which is the enemy of Israel. In Ps. Sol. 2:28-34 he seems to be Pompei,[3] and in Jer. 51:34 he is Nebuchadrezzar who devours Israel. In other passages he is the Egypt of the Exodus and the Red Sea

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[1] Howard Wallace, "Leviathan and the Beast in Revelation", Biblical Archaeologist Reader 1, ed. by G. Ernest Wright and David Noel Freedman (Garden City, N. Y.: Anchor Books, 1961), pp. 290-96.

[2] On the intention of John in making use of this motif from Da. 7:24, see below on the Caesar Cult; esp. Lyder Brun, "Die roemischen Kaiser in der Apokalypse", pp. 128-151.

[3] So Bousset, Off. Joh., p. 337; and G. Buchanan Gray in Charles, Pseudepigrapha, p. 633.

(Is. 51:9-10; Ezk. 29:3; and Ps. 74: 13-15). It is difficult to tell if anyone of these passages in particular was used by John. Is. 51:9-10 is the most plain in applying the Exodus typology to a new political situation and looking forward to a new Exodus. Ps. 74 has the many-headed dragon, and a part of God's victory over that dragon is the drying up of streams, even though brooks and springs are caused to flow at the same time. I see no convincing arguments for either text as one used deliberately by John. We may conclude, however, that within the OT the water monster was connected to Egypt or the Pharaoh (Ezk. 29:3; 32:2-3) even though the water was the means of his defeat (Ps. 74:13).

3. Satan and the Serpent (12:9)

The dragon is called Satan and the accuser (12:9, 10). The function of Satan is hardly new and rests in the name Satan itself (Job 1:6-7; Zech 3:1 ff). The role of Satan in leading astray also has its forerunner in the OT (I Ch. 21:1--compare the version in 2 Sam. 24:1). There is nevertheless no evidence that John intended to call up any of these passages; none of the other motifs in these texts occur within Rev. 12.

The situation is perhaps different in the case of the name, "the ancient serpent (ho ophis archaios)" (12:9). This seems a reference to Gen. 3, especially verses 14-16.[1] Within these three verses some of the major motifs of Rev. 12 are present: the enmity of the woman and the serpent, the pain in childbirth, and the phrase "her seed". This passage will be discussed later under the topic, "the rest

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[1] Bousset, Off. Joh., p. 341; Charles, Rev. I, p. 325; Swete, Apoc. p. 154; and Lohmeyer, Off. Joh., p. 101.

of her seed". There we will decide whether John intended to make a wider use of this passage and what reason he might have had. Now it is enough to observe that John does identify the dragon with the serpent of Gen. 3.

This identification, which might seem quite normal to us, is nevertheless not encountered within the OT and is only twice present in later Jewish literature. In Wisdom 2:23-24 it is said that God created man, and death entered by the devil's envy. In so far as this is a reference to the creation story it is a witness to the agent of evil as not only a serpent, but also as the devil. In a similar fashion, in I Enoch 69:6, one of the satans, Gadreel, is said to have led Eve astray. This evidence is rather slim, but from it we can legitimately argue that John was not breaking with tradition when he equated the serpent of Gen. 3 with his dragon.[1]

C. The Woman's Flight from the Dragon

1. The Wilderness (12:6)

Prigent is right in saying that any mention of a flight into a wilderness must call to mind the deliverance from Egypt and the wanderings.[2] Such a

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[1]Of all the rabbinic texts cited in connection with Rev. 12, including those cited in Hermann Strack and Paul Billerbeck, Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrash, vol. 3 (Munich: C. H. Beck' sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1926), pp. 812 ff, the earliest which come from the 2nd or 3rd century A.D. according to Strack's dating, are those cited by Lohmeyer, p. 101 from the Midrash connecting Satan and the serpent.

[2]Apoc. 12, p. 143. See also Swete, Apoc. pp. 151-2; there is nothing to indicate that John had in mind the flight of the Christians to Pella.

reference to the desert in the context of the Exodus is found in the Song of Moses, Dt. 32:10. There the Lord found Jacob in the desert or wilderness and cared for him.[1]

2. The Nourishing (12:6)

Swete sees here a reference to the nourishing of Elijah in I Kings 17:4.[2] Since the woman is most likely intended as Israel, the nourishing of Israel in the wilderness is much more probable as the origin of the notion. Bousset points to Ps. 78:23-30 as an example of the recital of the Exodus events which includes the manna and the birds.[3] Another instance is found in the Song of Moses mentioned above. Dt. 32:12-14 is a description of the bounty which the Lord gave to Jacob after he had delivered him.

3. 3-1/2 Years and 1260 Days (12:6, 14)

These figures are used throughout the Apoc. and refer in all probability to Da. 7:25 and 12:7. There the 3-1/2 years is the period of the last king and is to be followed by the coming of the Messianic kingdom. The likelihood of Daniel's being the source of these numbers is increased by John's borrowing the image of the ten horns from the same passage, Da. 7:24. The notion of the succession of kings of the world followed by the coming of the Messianic kingdom is found elsewhere in the Apoc. (17:7-14)

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[1] On the possible antiquity of this notion of Israel's being found in the wilderness, see Gerhard von Rad, Deuteronomy, The Old Testament Library; trans. by Dorothea Barton (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1966), p. 197.

[2] Apoc., p. 152.

[3] Off. Joh., p. 344.

The period of 3-1/2 years in Rev. 12 follows the Messiah's being caught up -- a reference to the Ascension of Christ. The period between the death of Christ and the writing of the Apoc. is at least sixty years, and I see no possibility that a writer of any intelligence could have been unaware of the discrepancy between 3-1/2 and 60. If this expectation of the Messianic kingdom 3-1/2 years after the Messiah's being caught up is not a mistake, then John had some reason for putting it in. This reason we will try to discover in the Appendix.

4. The Eagle (12:14)

The eagle's wings can serve as a metaphor for strength and speed (Is. 40:31), as a symbol for a world power (Ezek. 17), or for divine help (Assumption of Moses, 10:8; Ex. 19:4; Dt. 32:11). The last two passages are also references to the Exodus and the wanderings, yet most commentators rule that the eagles in these passages have nothing to do with Rev. 12.[1] One important point is that Rev. 12 is quite specific and seems to have a particular eagle in mind -- "the two wings of the great eagle" -- while there is nothing so definite in any of the OT texts. In Ex. 19:4 there are a number of eagles, so this could hardly be the text which John intended to recall. Dt. 32:11 uses a single eagle, and that eagle is the representative of the action of God. Since Dt. 32:10-14 has the motifs of the desert, the protection and the deliverance by the eagle, and the nourishment, it is possible that this Song of Moses was the text which suggested these motifs for

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[1] So Charles, Rev. I, p. 330; Bousset, Off. Joh., p. 344; and Lohmeyer, Off. Joh., p. 107. But see also Swete, Apoc. p. 158; and Austin Farrer, The Revelation of St. John the Divine, p. 148.

Rev. 12. However, there is a problem with two out of the three motifs. Being found in the desert, even though it may be an ancient concept, is not the same thing as fleeing into the desert, and the kinds of food in 32:13-14 seem to be from the Promised Land rather than the wilderness. So if John took these motifs from Dt. 32:10-14, he did so with little regard for their original meaning. The more probable alternative is that the Song of Moses shows that the motifs of the desert, the eagle, and being nourished were connected to the wanderings, and this connection could have had an indirect influence on John through the Jewish traditions about the Exodus.

5. The River and the Earth (12:15-16)

Evil and misfortune are occasionally characterized as a stream, a torrent, or just as water (Ps. 32:6; 124:4; Is. 43:2), and the dragon is often a water-monster.[1] None of these is comparable to the dragon's spewing streams from his mouth except in showing precedent for two aspects of the action; the whole picture is unprecedented.

As for the earth's swallowing something, the language is very close to that of the LXX in Dt. 11:6 and Num. 16:30, 32. In these texts the ones swallowed up are those who have rebelled against Moses. There is nothing comparable to the swallowing of a river which threatens the people of God.

A very attractive suggestion is that the river connected with the beast is modelled on the pattern of the Pharaoh and the Red Sea (Ex. 14:9), and the

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[1] See above, section II, B, 2.

earth's swallowing up the water on the appearance of dry land on which Israel passed through the Sea (Ex. 14:21-3).[1] One difficulty with this is that the water of the Red Sea turns out to be the instrument of God against Egypt, not that of the powers of evil against the people of God. This difficulty is alleviated somewhat by the traditions which speak of the water-monster as Egypt even though the Lord will use the water to defeat him (Ps. 74:13). It should also be remembered that the account of the Exodus portrays the Red Sea as a distinct threat to Israel as Pharaoh is pursuing her.

In looking back over the flight of the woman so far, we have found no single text out of the Jewish writings which would account for all of the motifs. Still, the flight to the desert, the eagle, the nourishing, the river dried up or swallowed are all motifs which the OT connects to the Exodus. As Prigent points out, the Exodus is also found in other places in the Apoc.[2] In 15:2-4 the company of the conquerors stands beside a sea of glass and sings the Song of Moses. In 8:7-13 and 16:2-14 the plagues on Egypt are recalled. Some of the other references to Exodus typology which Prigent finds seem uncertain, but these two are enough to show that the Exodus tradition was important for John. When we turn back to Rev. 12 and ask why these Exodus motifs might have been used by the author, the answer does not seem difficult. The woman, as we will see in the next section, functions as both Israel and as the Christian community. This church is undergoing trials as

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[1] So Swete, Apoc., p. 159; Prigent, Apoc. 12, pp. 143-44; and Farrer, Rev., p. 148; and Farrer, A Rebirth of Images (Glasgow: University Press, 1949), pp. 142 ff.

[2] Apoc. 12, pp. 143-44.

John writes -- something of the trials is found in 2:10, 13; 3:10; 13:7 ff. Rev. 12 is written to give the proper setting for and understanding of these trials: the church is going through a new exodus and she can also depend on the Lord's presence.

6. The Rest of her Seed (12:17)

The woman's seed (tou spermatos autēs) is precisely the phrase found in Gen. 3:15, a context which has, as we saw earlier, the further motifs of the serpent, the enmity between the woman and the serpent, and the pain in childbearing. Prigent argues, as others have, that Gen 3:15 in the LXX also has a reference to the birth of the Messiah.[1] This assertion is based on the use of the masculine pronoun, autos, instead of the expected neuter, auto. This makes the seed of the woman a singular instead of plural. J. Michl traces the references to the seed of the woman through the OT and later Jewish literature as well as Christian writings. His conclusion about the intent of the LXX is that while the singular pronoun leaves open the possibility of the seed's being interpreted as the one to come, this was not in the mind of the translator. Further, this interpretation is not found at all in Jewish writings and not within Christian literature until the time of Irenaus.[2] Michl is convincing in his arguments that Rev. 12 does not use Gen. 3 as a prophecy of a Messiah.

Michl also raises a question about the comparability of the women in Gen. 3 and Rev. 12; the one is earthly and the other is heavenly.[3] This difference

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[1] Ibid.

[2] J. Michl, "Der Weibessame (Gen. 3:15) in spaetjudischer und fruehchristlicher Auffassung", Biblica 33 (1952), pp. 388, 401, and 501.

[3] Ibid., p. 399.

is not so striking as it might first appear, since Eve is a figure that is surely larger than an individual, even though she is mortal, and the woman in Rev. 12 has also her earthly activity.

These motifs in common with Gen. 3:14-6 must give rise to a question about John's intention in calling the text to the attention of the readers. Again the answer is found in seeing Rev. 12 as an introduction to the conflict between the church and the Roman Empire. This conflict is described as rooted in the birth of the Messiah, it is the same conflict as that seen in the Exodus, and indeed the conflict is rooted in the sin of man and is as old as the enmity between Eve and the serpent. The struggle in which the church finds itself is not accidental or unusual; it is a part of the pattern of the enmity between the people of God and the forces of evil which is as old as the earth.

The "Rest of the seed of the woman" is identified with those who bear witness to Jesus. That the mother of the church should be the supernatural Jerusalem has its precedent in Gal. 4:26.[1] The status of the woman in Rev. 12 becomes a bit confusing, perhaps; she is the personification of Zion/Israel who, as the church, undergoes a new exodus. Any confusion on our part arises only because we are determined to make the woman into a single function symbol. It is plain that John uses her to catch up at least three women: the church, Israel, and even Eve.

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[1] Léon Gry, "Les Chapitres XI et XII de l'Apocalypse", Revue Biblique 31 (1922), p. 209.

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III. Michael and the Dragon

A. Michael

The importance of Michael among the angels is not hard to document. He is the angel for the saints of Israel (I Enoch 20:5) and God's archistratege (2 Enoch 22:4; 33:10). Michael also appears at the end of time (Da. 12:1) and does battle with the forces of evil (Da. 10:21 and Jude 9). He appears twice in Qumran, once as one of the four archangels (I QM 9:15 f) and once as the angel who seems a protector of Israel (I QM 17:6-8).[1]

Even though Michael does oppose the forces of evil and, in one case, the devil, there is still no record of his fighting a dragon.[2]

B. Battle in Heaven (12:7-8)

Since Satan is thrown from heaven after the battle, we must assume that the battle took place in heaven. Such battles in the sky are not unknown (Josephus, B. J., 6, 5, 3; 2 Macc. 5: 1-4; Sibyl. III: 796-808), but they are, in each of these instances, earthly battles transferred to and viewed in the clouds or in the air. They are not battles of heavenly bodies. This kind of war occurs, to my knowledge, only in Sibyl. V: 512 ff, a text later than the Apoc.

C. Fall from Heaven

In Is. 14:12-15 the Daystar, representing Babylon, is caused to fall, but to Sheol rather than earth. Satanil and his angels are cast from heaven in the

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[1] Several passages, cited by Charles and Bousset, do not mention Michael by name and so cannot stand as evidence for his role within Judaism.

[2] Wilhelm Lueken, Michael (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1898), p. 27.

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second day of creation according to 2 Enoch 29:4-5. Here again he does not land on earth but is over the pit. In the Book of Adam and Eve xiii, 1, the devil is talking to Adam and complaining that he has been thrown from heaven, and in xvi, 2, it is stated that he was hurled onto the earth. The angels of Satan are mentioned also in Mt. 25:41 and Jude 6.

So everything about this fall from heaven is found within these texts except the time of its occurrence. There is so far no instance of Satan's being cast out of heaven in the last times; in each of the instances listed, it is in proximity to creation.[1]

Bietenhard observes that within Jewish traditions Satan continues to have access to heaven, even though the fall of Satan is often attested. This is true in I Enoch 40:7, and in 2 Enoch 18:3 the watchers continue to be confined in the fifth heaven. Bietenhard also offers several instances of rabbinic writings with Satan being near to God's throne or having access to it. He further observes that in the NT Satan falls from heaven and no longer can enter there (Lk. 10:18; John 12:31; 16:11). This fall is connected with the work of Christ, and the complete absence of Satan from heaven is then a characteristic mark of a Christian cosmology.[2] We can at least conclude that the fall of Satan as the result of the work of Christ is attested within the NT, and John was not necessarily breaking new ground in this regard.

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[1] On God's battle with beasts and their defeat at the last times, see Ezek. 38-39.

[2] Hans Bietenhard, Die himmlische Welt im Urchristentum und Spaetjudentum. Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament (Tuebingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1951), pp. 209-221.

There is described a mammoth response to the fall of Satan (vv. 10-12): the kingdom of God is said to have come, the heavens rejoice, and the earth will receive her tribulation. There are several strange aspects to this victory over Satan. What kind of victory is it when the Messiah has been taken back to heaven and the earth is subjected to the wrath of the devil? The major step in understanding the quality of victory is to recognize the peculiar notion of victory used by the author of the Apocalypse.

> "He uses nikan and cognates fifteen times in all. In eleven instances it means conquest by sacrificial death. . . . In all victory passages, Christ and the saints conquer by dying; Satan and the powers of evil by physical force."[1]

In this perspective, the woes to the earth can be also the occasion for rejoicing, since that is also the opportunity for their unique form of conquering.

In 12:11 the conquering is done by Christ and his followers; in 12:7-8 it is by Michael and his angels. This can well lead to the suspicion that Michael is here a substitute for Christ, or that Michael's victory, in the customary sense, gives expression to the unorthodox victory won by Christ in his death. It seems also likely that the substitution was made in order to save the battle of Christ with the beast for the ultimate and decisive moment (19: 11-21). Yet it seems that if he wanted to do that, he could simply have omitted any dragon battle in ch. 12. His point -- that the suffering and thus the victory of the church is rooted in and caused by the death-triumph of Christ -- is made in the motifs of the ascension of

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[1]A. T. Hanson, The Wrath of the Lamb (London: S.P.C.K., 1957), p. 165.

the Messiah and the dragon's subsequent pursuit of the woman. We must conclude that the presence of the dragon battle, since it has no precedent in Judaism and the apparent substitution of Michael for Christ is difficult to understand, is due to something more than what we have discovered till now at work in John's forming this chapter.

IV. Summary

We have found many of the elements of Rev. 12 to have precedents in the OT: Israel as a mother giving birth with birth pains, the child-Messiah's being born, the use of astral references in Judaism, and astral occurrence called a sign, the dragon as the enemy of God and a water-monster, the dragon as Satan, the accuser, the war in heaven, and the fall of Satan.

Even more important than these precedents within the Jewish tradition, we have found a few passages which John used and deliberately called to mind:

1) Ps. 2:7-9 -- rule with a rod of iron. With this reference the child is identified as the Messiah, and, perhaps, this passage gave rise to the summary of Christ's work by his birth and enthronement.

2) Gen. 3:14-16 -- the serpent, the enmity of the serpent and the woman, the woman's pain in child-bearing, and the seed of the woman. By the use of this text, John made a claim about the antiquity of the struggle in which the church was involved.

3) Da. 7:24-5 -- the ten horns and three and a half years. The intent of these references is to point to the political dimension of the beast and the promise that it will lead to the coming of the Messianic age.

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4) The Exodus -- flight to the desert, the eagle, nourishing, and, perhaps, the river's being swallowed up. The reader is to recognize that the church is undergoing a new exodus.

For all of these precedents from and uses of the OT, there are important parts of the chapter which remain unexplained. There is no precedent for the celestial appearance of the woman and the dragon, nor for Israel as a woman giving birth to the Messiah, nor for Israel as a woman being pursued by a dragon, nor for the battle of Michael and the dragon. Almost all of the precedents in and uses of the OT serve to identify the principal figures with aspects of the OT, but none serve to explain the action - a supernatural woman's giving birth to the saviour, the dragon's pursuit of the woman, and the battle with the dragon. Even John's relating the flight of the woman to the Exodus does not change this; there is no OT precedent for Israel as a woman fleeing from a dragon, and the heart of the flight of the woman in Rev. 12 is to escape from the dragon. We know more or less who the characters are, but we have nothing on the origins of their actions.

It is conceivable that this flow of action came from the sanctified imagination of John. What we must now investigate is whether or not he might also have drawn taken these actions from outside the Jewish traditions. And, if we believe that he did, then we must ask why he did.

CHAPTER THREE

CONCEPTS OF THE ASTRAL WORLD

I. The Argument by Franz Boll

When John's readers read of a woman in heaven, clothed in the sun, with the moon at her feet, and with twelve stars as her crown, they would, argues Boll, have to think of the constellation Virgo.[1] Virgo is one of the twelve signs of the zodiac, which is the path in the heavens through which the sun and moon run their courses; this accounts for the twelve stars, the sun, and the moon in the description of the woman. The connection with the constellation Virgo is strengthened by the mention of a great dragon, because just below Virgo stands the huge constellation of Hydra, the water serpent. Another indication of the connection to the sidereal world is the word hestēke (12:4) referring to the situation of the dragon. This word is a technical term for the location of a constellation in the sky.

There are some other details in the chapter on which Boll does not want to place much weight but which are of interest. The constellation Hydra winds

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[1] Franz Boll, Aus der Offenbarung Johannis. Hellenistische Studien zum Weltbild der Apokalypse (Lepizig: B. G. Teubner, 1914) (Hereinafter referred to as Aus d. Off. Joh.), the following arguments are found on pp. 101-103.

through four of the twelve zodiacal signs; this possibly provides an explanation for the statement in 12:4 that the dragon knocked down one-third of the stars. Also the dragon has seven heads and ten horns. Both of these numbers can be explained easily: the ten horns from Daniel 7:7 and the seven heads in relation to Rev. 17:9-10. Nevertheless, the seven and the ten fit together awkwardly, and it might be that this juxtaposition is explained by the presence of two constellations, Corvus -- with seven stars -- and Crater -- with ten stars, between Virgo and Hydra.[1]

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[1]The number of stars in each constellation is according to Hipparchus and Ps. Eratosthenes. The only surviving work of Hipparchus is Hipparchi in Arati et Eudoxi Phaenomena Commentariorum, ed. with a German translation by C. Manitius (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1894). This was written in the second century B.C. and is a work on astronomy correcting the mistakes in the poem Phaenomena by Aratus (third century B.C.). For a discussion of the scientific contributions of Hipparchus, see Franz Cumont, Astrology and Religion Among the Greeks and Romans (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1960; first published in 1912), p. 34; Otto Neugebauer, The Exact Sciences in Antiquity (2d. ed.; Providence: Brown University Press, 1957), pp. 185 ff.; George Sarton, A History of Science: Hellenistic Science and Culture in the Last Three Centuries B.C. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959), pp. 296-302; and Lynn Thorndike, A History of Magic and Experimental Science, (vol. I; New York: Macmillan, 1923), p. 96.

The Catasterisms of Ps. Eratosthenes is a collection of fragments cited in later writers attributed to Eratosthenes. These have been collected by C. Robert in Eratosthenis Catasterismorum Reliquiae (Berlin, 1878). The undoubted Eratosthenes lived in the 3rd century B.C. and studied under Callimachus and wrote works on mathematics, geography, and chronology; see the article by Knaack on "Eratosthenes" in Pauly-W., vol. 6. The arguments against the authenticity of this work are made by E. Maass in Analecta Eratosthenica, Philosophische Untersuchungen, 6. Heft (Berlin, 1883). There is no evidence from the unquestioned works of Eratosthenes that he knew astronomy or mythology -- both of which are in the Catasterisms. The conclusion by Maass is that a group of star-sagas were assigned to Eratosthenes before the time of Ovid, who refers to the work in his Fasti. I agree with Maass that the Catasterisms are not by Eratosthenes and cannot with certainty be placed earlier that the first century B.C. One problem with the Catasterisms lies in the way Robert edits his text. Across a double page he lines up passages from the Scholia on Aratus, the Scholia on Germanicus, and Hyginus. From these Robert deduces the form of the original, which he calls the Epitome. In some cases there is no indication that any of the three writers considered Eratosthenes to be his source.

The two wings of the great eagle (12:14) could come, according to Boll, either from the constellation of the Eagle or from the custom of the Greeks to describe Virgo as having wings.

Apart from these details, the heart of Boll's argument is the connection of the heavenly woman, Virgo, with the dragon, Hydra, and the assertion that this bit of knowledge about the heavens could be expected of most of John's readers. These relative locations of the constellations are available in several documents, the most accessible of which are from Aratus and Ptolemy.[1]

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[1]Aratus, Phaenomena, 595 ff, and Ptolemy, Tetrabiblos, I, 9. The Phaenomena of Aratus is available in the Loeb Classical Library in the volume with Callimachus and Lycophron, trans. with and introduction by G. R. Mair (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960). The date of the work is set at about 275 B.C.; see Mair's introduction, pp. 186-89; Frederick H. Cramer, Astrology in Roman Law and Politics (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1954), p. 26; and Wilhelm Gundel and Hans Georg Gundel, Astrologumena (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1966), p. 47. The Phaenomena is a poem of 732 lines describing the constellations, the stars within them, and the relations of the constellations to each other. Beyond this the poem includes many myths and stories connected to the constellations. The popularity of the book is gauged by the commentaries on it, and the translations and imitations of it. Cramer, Astrology, pp. 26-7, lists six of the more important Greek commentators ranging from the third century B.C. to the seventh A.D. Cicero translated it about 60 B.C. and a part of the translation still survives; Ovid used Aratus for his own Phaenomena. This popularity is important in trying to assess how widespread or available certain myths were. If the myth is found in Aratus, then it is probable that it was known throughout the Hellenistic world because, if for no other reason, the work of Aratus was so widely known. For a description of the general popularity of astrology in this period see Cramer, Astrology, and Cumont, Astrology and Religion.

Ptolemy's astrological work, Tetrabiblos, dated ca. 150 A.D., is available in the Loeb Classical Library, ed. and trans. by F. E. Robbins (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1940) in the volume with Manetho. The Tetrabiblos is astrological in the strictest sense of the word; there is no interest in mythology.

Boll does recognize a few problems. If Virgo is one of the twelve signs of the zodiac, then how does she have a crown of twelve stars which is aquivalent to the zodiac? Boll argues that this kind of pedantic distinction was unimportant and that there are examples enough of such disregard of precision elsewhere. On the question of how the action in Rev. 12, such as the birth, is seen as taking place in heaven, Boll refers to falling stars and to the concept of the stars doing battle at the end of the world (in Seneca and in Sibyl. V:512 ff) as comparable to the action in Rev. 12.

II. The Objections of Freundorfer

Freundorfer, who wrote in order to give a thorough refutation of most of Boll's arguments including the ones relating to Rev. 12, begins from the conviction that the world of astrology is far removed from that of the NT and that it is a priori improbable that John made use of both the OT and astrology.[1] In spite of these assumptions, he wants to engage Boll on his own grounds.

The phrase, "in the heaven" (12:1) which for Boll referred to the sky full of stars, does not, according to Freundorfer, have to involve astral phenomena; it is rather referring to the heavens as the canvas on which the picutre of the vision is painted.

Freundorfer recognizes that the woman is given celestial clothing; his

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[1] Joseph Freundorfer, Die Apokalypse des Apostels Johannis und die hellenistische Kosmologie und Astrologie (Freiburg: Herber & Co., 1929), pp. 134 and 64. (Hereinafter referred to as Apok. d. Ap. Joh.).

objection is that Boll finds in this an indication that John used an astrological literary source.[1] This concern to show that John used no such source is expressed often throughout the book; Freundorfer wants to preserve the purity of John's vision and to avoid any conclusion that makes John look like an editor instead of a visionary. However, while he rightly denies that Boll has shown the necessity for a literary source, Freundorfer has not undone the evidence for some borrowing from astral concepts from general circulation, at least not by his denial of a literary source alone. For the rest of his objections we must evaluate each point of dispute.

Freundorfer is not persuaded by Boll's theory that the sun, moon, and twelve stars in Rev. 12 are references to the zodiac. In response, he asks why John would have used the sun and moon to indicate Virgo alone when the sun and moon pass through all twelve of the zodiacal signs.[2] It seems to me that Freundorfer has misunderstood Boll's argument. The identification of the woman as Virgo rests only in part on the sun and the moon. The fact that the figure is a woman and that she is in the heavens is already enough to call to mind Virgo. The sun and moon, by referring to their path along the ecliptic where the signs of the zodiac are located, serve only to narrow down the possible constellations in question to those within the zodiac. Another woman anywhere in the heavens would be difficult to find, but a woman within the zodiac would be impossible to identify as anything other than Virgo.

Freundorfer makes one claim against Boll that seems at first to be quite

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[1] Apok. d. Ap. Joh. p. 127.

[2] Ibid., p. 128.

strong. Boll does not, he charges, have any instance of the sun as a garment of divinity, as in Rev. 12:1, while the OT, in Ps. 104:2, does have.[1] There are however two difficulties with Freundorfer's point. First, in Ps. 104 it is God alone who covers himself with an unspecified light. The OT example does not offer an instance of a being other than the supreme God clothed in such a light. Freundorfer's use of the word 'divinity' hides a necessary distinction. Second, while it seems true that there is no instance of the sun being used to clothe a divinity within Hellenistic literature, the description of Isis in Apuleius, Metamorphoses, XI, 3, comes very close to it and has other celestial features which make it much more similar to Rev. 12 than is Ps. 104. It is not necessary to argue that John used the description of Isis as his model; it is enough to see that within the Hellenistic world such a celestial goddess was possible and that she has more similarities to Rev. 12 than does any OT text.

In discussing the dragon, Freundorfer is satisfied to point out that there are plenty of Oriental dragons and some in late Jewish literature; it is then, for him, unnecessary to go to the distant realm of astrology to explain the dragon.[2] Apparently he considered the characteristic interplay between the woman and the dragon to be unimportant or else leaves it to the fantasy of the seer, because none of the evidence which he cites has this element.

Another objection to both woman and dragon is that the proper names of the constellations are not used (gunē instead of parthenos, drakōn instead of

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[1] Ibid., p. 130.

[2] Ibid., p. 132.

hydros).[1] Boll does not deal with this, but the explanation is not hard to find. First, one must observe that the Messiah is not named either, even though it is plain that he is Jesus, so names do not play a large role in this chapter for any figure. Second, if John did take over a set of concepts from the astrological world then he would have to deal with the powers generally associated with the astral figures. One way to handle this would be to change the names of the figures; in the case of the woman he uses a name with no special powers so far as we can tell, and with the dragon, a name that connects him to the OT tradition of the powers of evil. A similar takeover of heavenly bodies is seen in Gen. 1:14-19.[2]

Freundorfer also assaults Boll's argument based on hestēken as the terminus technicus for locating constellations. His argument is that the term can be used in other ways also,[3] a point certainly not disputed by Boll. Freundorfer apparently does not deny that the term was used in the way which Boll described, and that is all that Boll's argument needs. Also, for Boll, this does not serve as a major proof but as a piece of corroborating evidence.

Freundorfer dismisses any connection of the fall of one-third of the stars with the length of the constellation Hydra. He does this because the figure 'one-third' has its meaning defined by the Apoc. itself.[4] In this case I think that

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[1] Ibid.

[2] See Gerhard von Rad, Genesis, A Commentary. The Old Testament Library, trans. by John H. Marks (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1961), pp. 53-4.

[3] Apok. d. Ap. Joh., pp. 132-34.

[4] Ibid., pp. 131-33.

the total length of the dragon is of little help in explaining the action of the dragon's tail, and that the one-third is indeed better understood in relation to its usage in the series of seven trumpets in the Apoc., just prior to ch. 12.

On the observation by Boll which matched up the seven heads and ten horns with the constellations of Corvus and Crater, Freundorfer does not grapple at all with why the seven and the ten were put together in this way. He does raise one question for which Boll has no answer: how does one get from the raven and the cup to the heads and horns?[1] There is no evidence that these ever formed a part of an astrological dragon.

Freundorfer finds Boll's explanation of the wings of the great eagle unacceptable; he is much more comfortable with an explanation involving an apocalyptic tradition, unknown to us, which made use of the wings of the eagle from Exodus 19:4.[2] And we have seen that, in fact, the wings of the eagle were connected to the Exodus tradition in the OT.

Freundorfer's own explanation of the descriptions in Rev. 12 relies on the free fantasy of the prophet using celestial metaphors. The existence of something vaguely similar within the Jewish tradition, such as Ps. 104:2, is all that he thinks he needs to disprove all of Boll's arguments. With his presupposition that astrology is infinitely far removed from John, it is to be expected that he would find anything Judaic, no matter how remote, to have a stronger claim than any astral concept, no matter how convincing. However, the excursus following this chapter

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[1] Ibid., p. 136.

[2] Ibid., pp. 137 ff.

will show that the world of astral beliefs is not remote from John. In all, Freundorfer has not undone the impressive similarity between the figures of Rev. 12 and the figures of Virgo and Hydra. Further, while he has pointed out some distant relatives of some of the details in Rev. 12, he has come up with nothing to undo our conclusion, in Chap. 2, about the inadequacy of the Jewish tradition to explain the action in Rev. 12.

Now we must address the question to the proposal by Boll: do Hydra and Virgo explain the action and the interrelationships within Rev. 12.? The answer is no; there is no child and no pursuit of the woman by the dragon. The first thing to be observed about constellations is that they do not act, they remain frozen. Boll's comparison of the movement of the stars at the final conflagration is of no help in understanding the supposed actions of these two constellations. There is no instance of constellations becoming unfrozen and coming to earth. Boll seems to recognize this difficulty and in order to account for the movement he argues that Virgo and Hydra were attached to the figures of Isis and Typhon and that this Egyptian myth provided the action.[1] We will deal with this in Chap. 5; for now it is sufficient to observe that Boll was compelled to go outside the realm of astral phenomena to that of myth in order to account for the action in Rev. 12. Concepts of the astral world do not alone provide an understanding of Rev. 12.

III. The Arguments of Lehmann-Nitsche and Farrer

Lehmann-Nitsche writes as an ethnologist who has something to offer

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[1] Aus d. Off. Joh., pp. 109-10.

to the discussion of Rev. 12. As if to show that he had done his exegetical homework, he discusses a number of works by biblical scholars on the chapter. He is for Boll and against Freundorfer.

According to Lehmann-Nitsche, the chapter must be rearranged in order for it to make sense. One means by which he would do the rearranging is by using the two words used for the dragon (drakōn and ophis) as coming from separate myths, the former located in heaven, the later on earth.[1] Any such surgery should be regarded with suspicion, and here the suspicions are very well founded. While it is true that ophis does not occur in the first part of Rev. 12, it is also true that in the last part of the chapter (vv. 13-17) which takes place on the earth, the term ophis occurs only once while drakōn, which should be from the heavenly myth, occurs three times.

He agrees with Boll that the dragon should be connected with the astral world, but not to the constellation Hydra. He argues that Scorpio is preferable to Hydra because:

1) it has brighter stars than Hydra,

2) the Scorpio constellation is connected with a primeval dragon in Chinese astronomy, and

3) the stars of Scorpio can be made to form a serpent with the stars of the constellation Libra forming three heads for

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[1]Robert Lehmann-Nitsche, "Der apokalyptische Drache", Zeitschrift fuer Ethnologie 65 (1934), pp. 193-229, esp. p. 200.

> the dragon. This would bring the whole dragon directly before and facing Virgo, while Hydra, on the contrary, is facing away from the dragon.[1]

None of the three reasons is convincing as it stands. Under the third, however, he raises a valid question as to how well Hydra fits the picture in Rev. 12 and also if some other celestial serpent might fit better. This we will discuss further when we come to Farrer's suggestions.

The color red connected to the dragon (12:3) is explained, according to Lehmann-Nitsche, not so much by the red color of the star Antares in Scorpio as by an ancient Asian concept of heavenly quadrants, each having an association with one season of the year and with a heavenly animal. This concept he finds first in Elam, then China and Persia, then in the southern part of North America. Using a quote from Herodotus to the effect that the Persians equated the south sea with the red sea, he concludes that in Persia and, by extension, in the other cultures named as well, there was a red quadrant-dragon associated with the south. He acknowledges some difficulties: in Iran there is no evidence of this division by colors, in China the dragon is connected not with the South but with the East, and his color in China is green, not red. These difficulties and a total lack of evidence supporting such a red quadrant-dragon do not stop Lehmann-Nitsche from using such a dragon to explain the red color in Rev. 12.[2]

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[1] "Der apok. Drache", pp. 214-18.

[2] Ibid., pp. 220-23.

Another example of this method of comparing cultures on the basis of astral features is found in his discussion of the wings of the eagle which are given to the woman. He starts from an observation, which we will discuss in Chap. 4, on the similarity of the Latin word for the eagle constellation, Aquila, and the word, aquilo, used for the north wind in the account by Hyginus of the birth of Apollo to Leto. Lehmann-Nitsche then introduces a bird connected with the wind in Grimm's fairy tales, and a thunder-bird of the North American Indians, and concludes from all of these that there was in each instance a mythical beast, the northwind bird, involved.[1] Such a farfetched argument should not keep us from taking the Leto-Apollo story seriously when we come to consider it.

One last instance of the confusion by Lehmann-Nitsche: the fall of one-third of the stars from heaven is said to have its origin in a meteor swarm out of a spot above the constellation Leo which is without stars. The only evidence which connects such a meteor swarm with a dragon comes from southern Europe in 1933, and was from the neighborhood of the constellation Draco.[2] This can only lead us to wonder what happened to his arguments connecting Rev. 12 with Scorpio.

A much more interesting set of suggestions having to do with the dragon of Rev. 12 comes from Austin Farrer.[3] His work is more interesting because he

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[1] Ibid., pp. 211-12.

[2] Ibid., pp. 225-29.

[3] A Rebirth of Images (Glasgow: University Press, 1949); The Revelation of St. John the Divine (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1964).

makes a valiant attempt to understand each part of the Apoc. in terms of its place in the whole structure. He has an awesome power of imagination turned toward making the book interpret itself, and the interplay of patterns which he describes is dazzling. In the earlier of his two books on the subject, he gives a description of concurrent patterns involving all of the following: the days of the week, the days of creation divided into morning and evening, the quarters of the year according to the Jewish festal calendar, and within each quarter the year goes by once or twice, and finally a sacred diagram involving the equation of 12 stones, 12 tribes, and the 12 signs of the zodiac arranged around the Jewish festal calendar. By the time of his later work he has reduced all of it to one half-week of halved weeks, while including still the Jewish calendar and the zodiac. It is much less complicated and accordingly much less fun to see him work it out.

The problem throughout is that his imaginative associations are uncontrolled. When there is such a large assortment of images to choose from as in the Apoc., it is perfectly possible, and Farrer admits it, to choose different associations and produce an entirely different set of patterns. Farrer gives no documentation to back up his arrangement of the Jewish calendar. He makes some artificial and schematic organizing steps which I cannot believe that John intended, such as almost every mention of lights referring to the feast of Dedication and every instance of judgement referring to the New Year. One instance of his work which shows more of his ingenuity than of John's structure is the way in which the calendar of the seasons is made to fit into his scheme: Farrer asserts that John works his way around the calendar backwards. Another instance of Farrer's uncontrolled associations is his use of the identification of the Lion and the Lamb. These are interchanged

XUM

to serve his organizational purposes, but they are interchanged only at certain places and not at others, and no justification is given as to why just those places are chosen.

While rejecting Farrer's schemes relating to the entire structure of the Apoc., we must recognize that at least one of his arguments on Rev. 12 is quite strong. He asserts that the dragon in Apoc. 12 is Scorpio. Thus he agrees with Lehmann-Nitsche, but he shows no sign of having used him. In fact his arguments are much more cogent. The proximity of Scorpio to Virgo is based on an identification of the figure between the two, that of Libra, as the claws of the scorpion. The result of this identification is that Scorpio appears to be reaching out for Virgo.[1] There is also the red star Antares for the color of the dragon and the observation that following Scorpio there are four signs of the zodiac, or one-third of the total, until the end of the year; this could explain the one-third of the stars cast down. Further, the eagle whose wings rescue the woman is also a constellation which rises at the same time as Scorpio.[2]

We must decide among these celestial serpents. Scorpio and Hydra are not the only ones available: between the two Bears there is Draco, and Serpens stands not far from Virgo in the hands of Ophiucus. The names for these two in the

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[1] Farrer does not document this equation of Libra with the claws of the scorpion; it is attested, though, in Aratus, 88-90.

[2] Rev. to St. Jn., pp. 140-44, 148. In his earlier work, Farrer made use of Eridanus, Cetus, and Aries to explain these astral references. Since all of these constellations are on the other side of the heavens from Virgo, the argument in the later book is an improvement.

Greek (drakōn and ophis) are the names used for the dragon in Rev. 12. We have then four serpents to choose from, each having something to recommend it.

Without hoping to make the decision final we can still make a few judgements about which of the four is more likely to have been used together with Virgo in a story like that in Rev. 12.

In my judgement, proximity to Virgo would be more important to such a usage than would the correspondence of names with Rev. 12. On this basis, Draco is the least likely to be found in a story with Virgo since he is the most distant. Also, the constellation Serpens, ophis, is one half of a larger constellation which includes the Serpent-holder, Ophiucus. So even though it is reasonably close to Virgo, it seems unlikely that it would have been used in a myth apart from the Serpent-holder.

The place of Scorpio beside Virgo depends on seeing the constellation Libra as the Claws of Scorpio. That this is not always the case in the Hellenistic period is shown by Ptolemy's consistent use of Libra instead of the Claws.[1] Further in Rev. 6, the third horseman holds a pair of scales. Boll argues that this is a part of a series in which each of the four are connected to a zodiacal sign, and this third one is Libra. While Freundorfer has completely undone Boll's arguments about all four being a part of an astrological series, the astral origin of this particular figure is not so convincingly refuted. Freundorfer makes only two points: (1) we could grant that John used the sign of Libra without using the twelve year cycle,

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[1]See the index to the Loeb Classical Library edition of Ptolemy's Tetrabiblos, under Libra.

and (2) it is possible to think of the scales without thinking of the constellation of the same form.[1] The second point is hardly overwhelming, and the first is close to an agreement that the constellation Libra played a role in John's formulation of the picture. All of this is only to raise the possibility that John knew and used the constellation Libra in the form of scales. If this is so, and the case is not clear cut, then Scorpio is eliminated from consideration as the dragon because it would be one sign removed from Virgo.

Emphasizing again the tenuous nature of the decision, it seems that Hydra is the only stellar serpent which does not have something against its being related to the dragon in Rev. 12. It has the advantage of being, by its name, a water-serpent, and this feature fits well with the stream which flows from the dragon's mouth to entrap the woman (12:15).

The questions which we raised about Boll's suggestions are still not answered. There is no way to account for the birth of the child or for the actions of the figures on earth. Without some connection of Virgo and Hydra to a myth containing such action, the use of the constellations in John's conception of Rev. 12 remains only a possibility for which we have no good evidence.

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[1] Freundorfer, Apok. d. Ap. Joh., pp. 118 ff. See the excursus following this chapter, pp. 95-97.

EXCURSUS

THE USE OF ASTRAL CONCEPTS IN THE REST OF THE APOCALYPSE

Apart from his interpretation of Rev. 12, Franz Boll finds other instances of astral beliefs throughout the Apoc. Freundorfer attacks Boll's five major suggestions, the ones involving extended passages -- including Rev. 12 --, and tries to disprove them.

It is important to evaluate these arguments about the extended passages as well as Boll's proposals about individual motifs and concepts in order to see how much John is conversant with and makes use of astral concepts. We have already seen, in Chap. 2, that knowledge of astral phenomena is well attested in the Jewish apocalyptic tradition. In assessing Boll's arguments we can also ask if John follows the usages of Jewish apocalyptic in this regard or whether he goes beyond Jewish tradition.

1. Motifs and Small Passages

Before he discusses the major passages which involve the use of the sidereal. Boll tries to establish by means of several phrases scattered throughout the Apocalypse that the conceptual world of the author included the astral.

A. The Obvious References

Boll shows to my satisfaction that isolated phrases with obvious references to the heavens are similar to those in Hellenistic astral literature: Rev. 4:1 (doors in heaven), 6:12 (moon turning into blood), and 6:13 (stars fall as figs from a tree).[1] While these plainly refer to astral occurrences they seem to be metaphors rather than formative elements in John's thought or visions.

B. Numbers

Boll asserts, as though it needed no argument, that the numbers four, seven, and twelve, so prevalent throughout the Apoc., gain part of the their significance from astronomical observations: the four seasons, the seven planets, and the twelve signs of the zodiac. He does not argue that these numbers have an exclusively or even originally astronomical meaning. The number twelve, for instance, must be understood primarily as a reference to the twelve tribes of Israel.[2] This is a very nebulous influence of the astral concepts and it is difficult to prove or disprove. Even if it is regarded as proved that these numbers have their origin in sidereal events, Boll shows no instance in which the astral heritage of the number itself is used by John. The subject becomes one of interest to a historian of the significance of numbers but not to an expositor of John. This does not rule out the possibility that in a particular case in conjunction with other motifs, a number may take on its astral significance, as the 12 stars of Rev. 12; it does mean that the

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[1] Aus d. Off. Joh., pp. 16-18.

[2] Ibid., pp. 20-23.

number by itself is not evidence of John's referring to celestial bodies.

C. The Heavenly Throne (Rev. 4)

Addressing himself to the star-heaven reflected in the Apoc., Boll makes the limited point that there are astral thrones like the one in Rev. 4 outside the realm of Jewish apocalyptic.[1] This restricted point cannot be denied, but neither is it very significant because the heavens as the throne and containing the throne of God is present within the Jewish tradition.[2]

D. Rev. 15:2

The sea of glass mingled with fire seems like a description of the heavenly ocean with stars. Boll cites the similarities to the concept of the heavens as a sea across which the sun journeys. This is attested in Egypt but is quite scarce within the Greco-Roman world.[3] Perhaps we should limit ourselves to Boll's observation that the picture calls to mind a heavenly scene; the evidence is too slim to go any further.

Those standing beside the sea in 15:2, those who have conquered, have their place in heaven, according to Boll, by means of the notion that souls become stars when men die. He sees this belief as a part of the Jewish apocalyptic tradition.[4]

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[1] Ibid., p. 31.

[2] See Bietenhard, Die himmlische Welt, pp. 53 ff.

[3] Boll, Aus. d. Off. Joh., p. 32.

[4] Ibid. On the popularity of this concept in the Hellenistic world, see Cumont, Astrology and Religion, pp. 96 ff.

It seems likely that John does use this notion of astral immortality in 15:2.

E. Rev. 6:9

The presence of the souls under the altar is explained on the basis of a celestial altar, a constellation by that name, in the southern part of the heavens near the Milky Way. The stars in the Milky Way are then the white-robed souls who are beneath this astral altar. Boll wants to show that this altar, thysiastērion, is also the storehouse of souls as in 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch. In order to make the argument he has to go through the following steps:

1) the storehouse, tamieia, of the south wind (Job 9:9, LXX) is identical with the altar, thyterion, in the south (in Aratus, 405) because both of these are said to be opposite Arcturus;

2) this storehouse/altar of Job and Aratus is then equated with the storehouse of souls in 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch;

3) this storehouse/ altar is reflected in the notion of the souls under the altar in Rev. 6.[1]

Step number one is hardly convincing. The possibilities for stars or constellations across the heavens from Arcturus are fairly numerous, so that it is not necessary to equate two things opposed to Arcturus. On the second step, there is no evidence that either 4 Ezra 4:35 f or 2 Baruch 30:2 conceives of the storehouse of souls as connected with any altar. Further, every instance of such a treasury which I can find is connected with Sheol and not at all with the portions of heaven which contain the stars.[2]

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[1] Ibid., pp. 32-5.

[2] 1 Enoch 22:3; 2 Baruch 21:3; 4 Ezra 4:35; 7:32.

This series of identifications falls through so that there is no evidence within the Jewish or, on the basis of Boll's arguments, the Hellenistic world for the connection of the treasury of souls with an astral altar. The passages in Job, Aratus, and the Apoc. might lead us to raise some questions about their possible interrelationship, but not to draw any conclusions.

F. The 24 Elders

The 24 elders (Rev. 4:4) are explained on the basis of a report by Diodorus Siculus II, 31, 4 that the Babylonians had 24 stars, 12 to the north and 12 to the south of the ecliptic, known collectively as the judge of the world. The fact that the 24 elders do not have the function of judges, but rather of interpreters (7:13), priests (5:8), or singers (5:8, 14; 11:16; 19:4) is admitted by Boll but only to prove that John no longer understood the true source of these 24 figures.[1] Since my task is to try to understand what John understood by the various figures, i.e. whether or not he consciously used concepts from the celestial world, Boll's own argument makes his observation worthless to me. At any rate, Charles gives a much better explanation of the 24 elders.[2]

G. The 4 Creatures

The four creatures, in connection with the heavenly ocean and the 24 elders, are not fully explained by Ezekiel and are to be understood as constellations. The order of the constellations referred to by the 4 creatures is Scorpio-man, Leo, Taurus, and Pegasus. Each of these have a royal star, according to Firmicus

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[1] Aus d. Off. Joh., pp. 35 ff.

[2] Rev. I, pp. 128 ff.

Maternus (4th cent. A.D.); however in the case of Pegasus there is no evidence for this, only Boll's assessment of the probability. These royal stars in the constellations stand at 90 degree intervals around the heaven, and they are all close to the celestial equator. These positions explain the reference in Rev. 4:6 to the four creatures' being in the middle of the throne -- the equator divides the heavens -- and around the throne -- it also encircles the heavens.[1]

Two problems in this explanation are obvious. (1) Why is the constellation Scorpio here the scorpio-man? And why is there no trace of the Scorpio in John's figure? (2) Since John's fourth figure is the eagle and a constellation by that name is present in the Greek skies (aetos), why is Pegasus equated with or substituted for the eagle? Neither of these problems is dealt with. Two of the four creatures are not convincingly explained, and the whole picture of their being placed around the celestial equator disintegrates. Boll has not offered anything that helps us to understand the differences between the creatures in the Apoc. and those in Ezekiel.

H. The Heavenly Jerusalem

The description of the heavenly Jerusalem is also informed by astral traits. The 12 foundations (21:14) are indicated by the word themelioi, which is synonymous with stoicheioi, which, in turn, is equivalent on at least one occasion to zodioi. By this chain he deduces that the 12 foundations are in part references to the 12 signs of the zodiac.[2] It should be no surprise if the heavenly Jerusalem

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[1] Aus. d. Off. Joh., pp. 36-39.

[2] Ibid., p. 39.

were described in celestial terms. However in view of this contrived evidence, I wonder if it would have been possible for John to have used the number 12 in a way in which Boll could not have construed it as referring to the zodiac. Or, to put the same question another way, if themelioi and stoicheioi are synonymous, and the latter is somehow closer to zōdioi, why did John not use stoicheioi?

At this point Boll states that he has shown that the view of the heavens in the Apoc. is not just that of Jewish apocalyptic but is also informed by astral mysticism. In reviewing his descriptions of the astral motifs considered to this point, the ones which we have found to be well established are (1) that souls were conceived of as stars and (2) the throne of God is conceived of as the heavens. Since both of these are present within Jewish apocalyptic, Boll has not shown that John has gone beyond that tradition.

There are still a few passages which, while not a part of John's view of the heavens, do find an explanation, according to Boll, in the world of astrology.

1. Wormwood

In Rev. 8:10, at the sounding of the third trumpet, the star Wormwood, Apsinthos, falls from heaven into the waters and makes them poisonous. The problems of interpreting this passage are (1) there is no star named Wormwood and (2) wormwood is not poisonous. However, in an astrological catalogue of plants, the category of Artemisia, under which wormwood is found, belongs to the sign of Scorpio. Since Scorpio is poisonous, wormwood that comes from heaven is also poisonous.[1] This explanation seems quite strained, but I do not know of any other

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[1] Ibid., pp. 41 ff.

explanation which seems any less unlikely.

J. The Lamb

With seven horns, the lamb in Rev. 5 sounds more like a ram, and the seven eyes make it sound like a star-group. Boll does not care to draw a line of direct influence from the constellation Aries, krios, to the lamb, arnion, of the Apoc., but he does point out the similarities and allows for the possibility that a linking step may be found. He argues, as if to make the discovery of the missing link more probable, that the change from krios to arnion could be explained by their proximity to each other in the LXX (Jer. 11:19; Ps. 113:4, 6). Also the number of stars in Aries (17, 16, or 13 depending on your author) is ample to accomodate the 7 horns and 7 eyes. Finally, however, Boll is not sure whether or not the final redactor of the Apoc. was aware of the astral background of this figure.[1]

In I Enoch 83-90, in the apocalypse of animals, we see that a horned lamb, or a lamb become powerful, becomes a ram. This horned lamb is the leader of the people and, since he is connected to David, perhaps the Messiah. However there is nothing here to connect this ram with the zodiacal ram; indeed this passage provides an explanation within Jewish tradition for a lamb with horns. From all of this, we can conclude that there is no justification for Boll's connection, even indirect, between the lamb of Rev. 5 and the constellation Aries.

K. The Morning Star

The Morning Star appears in the Apoc. in two places. In 22:16 it is equated with Jesus, and since it is the brightest star, Venus, Boll argues that John

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[1] Ibid., 44-47.

was saying something like Jesus is the light of the world. In 2:28 the Morning Star is not Christ, but is given to those who conquer. This, Boll argues, is tied to the notion of the magical power which a star had for one who could make it serve him. Thus the one who conquers is given the power of the strongest star to serve him.[1] Since I do not find evidence for such magical powers elsewhere in the Apoc., I am not inclined to believe this explanation. Also when you compare this promise with the previous promises having to do with rule over nations, it seems an anticlimatic end to promise such magical powers. It seems more likely that John uses the Morning Star as a sign of ruling power, and so this statement is in parallel with the first two, "I will give him power over nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron". This explanation gives us no help in understanding the relation of the Morning Star here with the one in 22:16.

The presence of the Morning Star in 22:16, in a manner that suggests that John expected his readers to understand what was meant, does argue strongly for John's use of an astral concept. The fact that it is used in two quite different ways in the book indicates either his carelessness or his complete freedom in the use of such material.

L. The Son of Man (Rev. 1:13-16)

Boll's last suggestion before he moves on to the major passages deals with the appearance of the Son of Man in Rev. 1. The extraordinary, almost grotesque appearance of this figure is certainly related to figures described in Daniel and

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[1] Ibid., pp. 147 ff.

Ezekiel. However all of these forms have their parallel in the descriptions of astral gods, one for each five or ten degrees of the zodiac, found in Nechepso-Petosiris[1] and in a passage attributed to Hermes Trismegistus.[2] Boll begins from the obviously stellar motif of the seven stars in the right hand (1:16) and argues that the whole figure is astral in conception. One element which is not clearly sidereal but which Boll wants to establish as such is the sword in the mouth of the Son of Man (1:16). While he has evidence that the sword was used as a metaphor for a comet,[3] he does

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[1]There are only fragments, but a large number of them, from a handbook of astrology connected with the Egyptian names of Nechpso, a king, and Petosiris, a priest. Another name, in various forms, is attached to this handbook: Salmeschoiniaka, Salmeschniaka, and Salmesachanaka (Cramer, Astrology, p. 16). A collection of the fragments was made in 1894 by Ernest Riess in Nechepsonis et Petosiridis fragmenta magica, Philologus, suppl. 6, pp. 325-94. With the publication of the Catalogus Codicum Astrologorum Graecorum (12 vols., 1898-1953) more excerpts have been discovered. Some of the quotes are found in the writings attributed to Thessalus (first cent., A.D.) and in Vettius Valens and Antiochus (second cent., A.D.). (Cramer, p. 18).

Wilhelm and Hans Georg Gundel, Astrologumena, p. 31, claim a fourth cent., B. C. date for this handbook. Cumont, Astrology and Religion, p. 43, Cramer, Astrology, pp. 16 f, and Guenther Haufe, in Johannes Leipoldt and Walter Grundmann, Umwelt des Christentums, vol. 1 (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1965), p. 83, all would agree with the Gundels on the Egyptian origin of the handbook, but all three of them place it in the second century B.C.

Cramer points out that the handbook presented itself as a hermetic work, passing on the revelations which Hermes gave to listeners. (Astrology, p. 17) All of these scholars agree on its widespread use as a book of great authority.

[2]This passage Boll does not identify or date. It is not a part of the star-catalogue of Hermes Trismegistus from the time of Hipparchus. On this latter, see Wilhelm Gundel, Neue astrologische Texte des Hermes Trismegistos (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1936) and Neugebauer, Exact Sciences, pp. 68-9.

[3]Tacitus, Annals XV, 47, and Josephus, b. J. VI, 288 f.

not argue that John was dependent on any literary source for this figure, rather he contends that it is possible that John conceived of this figure in astral terms like those available in the Hellenistic world.[1]

Of these elements in the Apoc not related to John's view of the heavens, Boll's arguments for the star Wormwood and the Morning Star can be accepted. These two are obviously related to stars; Boll's service is to place them in relation to Hellenistic astrology. Beyond these two points, the explanation of the sword as a comet seems possible even though the whole figure of the Son of Man seems to be based on Daniel and Ezekiel. While in the earlier summary, following section H, we found nothing in Boll's arguments which carried John beyond the Jewish traditions, here the matter is different. I know of nothing in the apocalyptic tradition which is comparable to the Wormwood star or to the Morning Star. It is of course possible that these were connected with the apocalyptic traditions which John used, but there is no evidence for such a connection.

II. Major Passages: Boll versus Freundorfer

No one, to my knowledge, has worked through the arguments of Boll and Freundorfer to decide what if anything of Boll's conclusions remain secure. In this section we will attempt just that.

A. Rev. 16 and 8

Boll begins from the observation, made frequently, of the similarities between the series of seven trumpets and that of the seven bowls. On the basis of

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[1] Aus. d. Off. Joh., pp. 50-56.

two further texts, a hippocratic text on the hebdomad, ca. 450 B.C., and the slav. Enoch 30:8, he argues that John knew a series like those in chaps. 16 and 8 and adapted it for his own use.

The text from slav. Enoch on the creation of Adam from seven parts plays the larger role in Boll's argument. The following is the way Boll lines up the similarities.

slav. Enoch 30:8	Rev. 16	Rev. 8
1. From earth:flesh;	1. On the earth: sores;	1. 1/3 of earth, trees, grass burned up;
2. (from sea:blood and tears)	2. on sea: blood;	2. on sea: blood;
- from dew: blood;	3. on fresh water: blood;	3. fresh water made bitter;
3. from sun: eyes;	4. sun makes fire and heat;	4. sun: darkness;
4. from stones: bones;	5. on the throne of the Beast (Rome): pain;	5. locusts attack men;
5. from speed of angels and clouds: understanding;	6. 3 spirits from the mouth of the Beast as angels;	6. 4 angels on the Euphrates; the cavalry attacks; angels clothed with clouds;
6. from grass: veins and hair;	(missing)	(missing)
7. from Spirit of God and wind: soul and breath.	7. on air: lightning and thunder, etc.	7. (in region of air): lightning, thunder, etc.

[1] Aus d. Off. Joh., pp. 63-4.

Boll discusses some of the differences between the Apoc. and the scheme in slav. Enoch and draws out some connections which are not apparent on reading the three -- such as between the hills of Rome and the stones from which Adam was given bones. Boll claims to have a complete correspondence between the creation scheme in slav. Enoch and the bowls of Rev. 16. He explains the differences in the trumpet series, Rev. 8, on the basis of John's having used the more nearly original scheme for the bowls and modified it for the trumpets.[1]

Freundorfer makes several points damaging to this theory. The most obvious is that the distinction between salt water and fresh water in the Apoc. has no comparison in slav. Enoch. Also the line which Boll draws, under 4 or 5, from the throne of the beast to the hills of Rome to stones to bones is more than slightly strained.[2] Also it is clear that the role of the angels under 5 or 6 is so varied that it is difficult to assume any one source. The sores from the earth and water turning into blood are more easily explained from the plagues on Egypt.

Boll says that the string of the similarities between slav. Enoch and Rev. 16 is as follows: earth, water, sun, stones, angels, and air.[3] This list would be impressive evidence for dependence upon a common scheme. When Freundorfer has made his objections, however, the list is smaller: earth, water, heavens, and air.[4] In a series this brief with the elements so very common, the similarities do not seem to me to be enough to warrant any claims of dependency or common source.

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[1] Ibid., pp. 64-5.

[2] Apok. d. Ap. Joh., pp. 29 ff.

[3] Aus d. Off. Joh., p. 65.

[4] Apok. d. Ap. Joh., p. 32.

B. Rev. 9:1-12

Boll argues that all the elements in 9:1-12 which are not explained from John's use of the prophecy of Joel are explained by his use of an astrological figure, namely a Centaur which Boll has shown to be allied with the zodiacal figure Sagittarius.[1] This Centaur/Sagittarius appears on an ancient Babylonian boundary stone and in the zodiac in the temple at Dendera.[2] Freundorfer disputes the use of this figure and anything else outside of Joel and the rest of the OT. The following are the points of dispute.

The locusts in Rev. 9 are described as horses prepared for battle. Boll points out that the Centaur/Sagittarius is equipped with a bow and arrows.[3] Freundorfer argues that the references to war within Joel are sufficient to explain the war-like appearance of the locusts.[4]

The locusts have heads like humans. So does the Centaur, but Freundorfer objects to this on two counts. First, the Centaur has two faces, and so he is disqualified. Second, the locusts in Joel 2:7 are compared with human warriors, so

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[1]Franz Boll, Sphaera (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1903), pp. 181 ff.

[2]The temple at Dendera was built in Ptolemaic times; see Adolf Erman, Die Religion der Aegypter (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1934), pp. 361-71. For the reproductions of the remains of the temple see Auguste Mariette-Bey, Dendérah (6 vols.; Paris: A. Franck, 1870). The dates suggested for the zodiacs at Dendera are all about the time of Augustus (so Boll, Sphaera, p. 160) or from Augustus to Nero (thus Martin Nilsson, Geschichte der griechischen Religion, II (Munich: C.H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1950), pp. 261 ff.

[3]Aus d. Off. Joh., p. 68.

[4]Apok. d. Ap. Joh., 39.

anything beyond that is unnecessary.[1]

The locusts in Rev. 9 and the Centaur have tails like scorpions, and Freundorfer confesses that this is one motif which he cannot explain.[2]

The locusts in Rev. 9 have crowns. Boll cites the Babylonian form of the Centaur which has a cap on its head and the Egyptian form with a double crown. Also the Greeks referred to Sagittarius as diadēmatophoros and as a kingly figure.[3] Freundorfer argues that there is no Hellenistic evidence of a figure such as this wearing a stephanos, as in Rev. 9, and that the Egyptian double crown does not serve as good evidence.[4] The emphasis of the use of the word stephanos as the only one admissable as evidence smacks of playing games with words, and there is no reason to eliminate the zodiacal figure from Dendera with a double crown as evidence. Boll wins this round.

John's locusts have hair as a woman's. Boll says that the Babylonian and Egyptian figures have such hair, and that long hair continued as a characteristic of Sagittarius well into the Middle Ages.[5]

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Boll, p. 69; Freundorfer, p. 39.

[3] Aus d. Off. Joh., p. 70. The texts referring to Sagittarius as a kingly figure from Vettius Valens, 2nd cent. A.D., cited by Boll in Sphaera, p. 181.

[4] Apok. d. Ap. Joh., pp. 40 ff.

[5] Aus d. Off. Joh., p. 71.

Freundorfer raises a question about the hair on the Sagittarius figures, while not questioning its presence on the Babylonian Centaur.[1] However the only piece of Boll's evidence that is in doubt is the image in the Dendera zodiac. In the tiny reproduction of this figure[2] it is difficult to tell whether or not there is hair because a second face is on the back of the head. While Boll's arguments are convincing, he was not completely candid about the Dendera figure.

On the appearance of the locusts, Boll seems to have the best of it. Joel 2:7 does not explain the human faces of the locusts because it mentions nothing of the appearance of the locusts; rather they are said to charge and scale walls as warriors do. So the faces, the scorpion tails, crowns, and hair are explained from the Centaur/Sagittarius but not by Joel. On the basis of these similarities it seems probable that the feature of the war-like appearance was one shared by the Sagittarius and the locusts in Joel.

Freundorfer raises the possibility that these features are connected with the Centaur but not with an astrological figure. Since he feels it is improbable that John used anything from the realm of astrology, he is much more comfortable with the concept of an unconscious influence of a pagan world view, such as how a Centaur looked.[3] However, all the evidence from Hellenistic times is connected to the figure of Sagittarius, and the features in question continue to be associated

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[1] Apok. d. Ap. Joh., p. 55.

[2] Aus. d. Off. Joh., p. 97.

[3] Apok. d. Ap. Joh., pp. 55, 66.

with the zodiacal figure into the Middle Ages.[1] The conclusion has to be that John combined the locusts of Joel with the figure of Sagittarius.

Several other motifs in the chapter, the torture for five months, men seeking death and not finding it, the king of the angels, and the smoke from the abyss are the object of Boll's attempt to interpret the chapter in terms of the astral concepts of Hellenism. In each of these cases, Freundorfer has the best of the argument.[2] These failures by Boll do not change our conclusion about the appearance of the locusts.

C. Rev. 6:1-8

The four horses and their colors are understood as coming from Zechariah 1 and 6. However, Zech. does not provide an explanation for all of the elements in this pericope. Boll tries to interpret some of the unexplained in terms of four successive years out of a twelve year cycle in which each year is under one of the zodiacal signs. He has ample proof that such twelve year cycles were known and used in the Hellenistic period.

He begins from the third horseman who is holding scales and bringing a scarcity of grain although leaving wine and oil untouched. Boll indentifies this horseman as the constellation Libra not only by the sign of the scales, but also by the bringing of famine which is a trait of the Libra years in some of the twelve year cycles which he cites.[3]

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[1] Aus d. Off. Joh., p. 73.

[2] Apok. d. Ap. Joh., pp. 47-63.

[3] Aus d. Off. Joh., pp. 83-85.

The second rider has a sword and takes peace from the earth. The sign corresponding to this, the one just before Libra, is Virgo. Boll cites the myth, related by Aratus and Ovid, of Dike leaving the earth, taking peace with her, and becoming the constellation Virgo. Also, in Egypt Virgo is pictured as holding a sword.

The fourth rider is named Death and Hades follows after him. The corresponding sign is Scorpio, which has power over death and is connected with the half of the heavens referred to as Hades.[1]

The first horseman gives Boll some trouble because of what seems an embarassment of riches. The first rider has a bow, a crown, and he conquers. The sign to come before the second rider is that of Leo. In a text attributed to Teukros (first cent. A.D.), Leo has a bow. However there is another way to read the series, based on the list of plagues in Rev. 6:8c. The list there almost corresponds to the effects of the horsemen: sword (Virgo - second rider), famine (Libra - third rider), pestilence (Scorpio - third rider), and wild beasts (?). If Boll follows this series, the sign to follow Scorpio is Sagittarius, and Boll can show instances of wild beasts under that sign. Also, Sagittarius could be tied to the first rider since he has a bow and is a kingly figure. On the other hand, Leo can be associated with the wild beasts also. Boll chooses, for reasons not entirely clear, to go with Leo.[2]

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[1] Ibid., pp. 84-87.

[2] Aus d. Off. Joh., pp. 90-91.

Boll's ability to explain either of these two possibilities from his astrological texts looks a bit suspect. How many different signs could he explain in how many different positions? And this question is the knife with which Freundorfer cuts up the picture which Boll painted. Freundorfer quotes the texts to which Boll refers much more extensively than Boll does; he shows every year in the twelve year cycles, and every trait that might be connected in some way with the events connected to the four horsemen.[1] Four of the texts central to Boll's argument are printed in table form, and it is apparent even before Freundorfer draws his conclusions that in a majority of the years war, hunger, death and pestilence are all predicted. There seems to be no consistent characteristic of any of the signs. However, in the four texts cited extensively and in six other quoted less fully, it is clear that the year of Virgo is one of the more peaceful in the cycle. Libra is not typically a year of hunger, and Scorpio is not consistently tied to death.[2]

In all, this chapter of Freundorfer's makes the reading of the whole book worthwhile. The only good evidence for John's dependence on such a twelve year cycle would be an instance in which the same succession of plagues as in Rev. 6 is tied to the proper signs. Freundorfer has shown that Boll did not produce such evidence. Perhaps Boll felt it was sufficient to show that such a matchup was possible or conceivable. But the texts which he used show that any kind of arrangement is possible, and any kind of arrangement is just as possible without

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[1] Apok. d. Ap. Joh., pp. 88 ff.

[2] Apok. d. Ap. Joh., pp. 96, 101, 106, 108.

any reference to twelve year cycles.

D. Summary

We can now assemble the instances of John's references to the astral world which we have gleaned from the discussion between Boll and Freundorfer. They are as follows:

1) the passages which are on first reading obviously connected with the stellar world:

Rev. 4:1, the doors in heaven,

6:12, the moon turns to blood,

6:13, stars fall as figs from a tree,

8:10, the star Wormwood, and

22:16, the Morning Star;

2) 15:2, souls as stars,

3) 4:3 ff, the throne of God,

4) 1:13-16, the sword in the mouth of the Son of Man as a comet -- this one is possible but nowhere near certain --,

5) 9:1-12, the locusts as Centaur-Sagittarius.

To this list we add the possibility of Rev. 12 as the merger of some myth with the constellations Virgo and Hydra.

Some of these, the Morning Star, Wormwood, the locusts in ch. 9, do not have any precedent in the Jewish apocalyptic tradition. The conclusion then is that while Boll's thesis has been reduced, parts of it still stand. John was open to using and did use some material from the world of astral concepts outside the Jewish tradition.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE GREEK MYTH OF LETO, APOLLO, AND PYTHON

I. The Suggestions of Dieterich, Allo, and Zielinski

One of the earliest attempts to interpret Rev. 12 with the use of non-Jewish material was made by Albrecht Dieterich. Under a discussion of the Pythian dragon he argues that an earlier form of Rev. 12 was dependent on the myth of Apollo's birth and his slaying of the dragon.[1] The documentation for this Apollo myth is quite impressive, ranging from the Homeric Hymns to the Fabulae of Hyginus.[2] It is at least enough to warrant our investigation the similarities which he sees between this myth and Apoc. 12.

The principal text which he uses for the comparison with Rev. 12 is number 140 of the Fabulae of Hyginus. For ease of reference I include here the translation by Mary Grant.

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[1]Albrecht Dieterich, Abraxas. Studien zur Religionsgeschichte des spaetern Altertums (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1891), pp. 111 ff.

[2]Ibid., pp. 115, 120 f. The documentation is taken entirely from Theodor Schreiber, Apollon Pythoktonos. Ein Beitrag zur griechischen Religions- und Kunstgeschichte (Leipzig: Wilhelm Engelmann, 1879).

140. Python

Python, offspring of Terra, was a huge dragon who, before the time of Apollo, used to give oracular responses in Mt. Parnassus. Death was fated to come to him from the offspring of Latona. At that time, Jove lay with Latona, daughter of Polus. When Juno found this out, she decreed (?) (facit) that Latona should give birth at a place where the sun did not shine. When Python knew that Latona was pregnant by Jove, he followed her to kill her. But by the order of Jove the wind Aquilo carried Latona away, and bore her to Neptune. He protected her, but in order not to make void Juno's decree, he took her to the island Ortygia and covered the island with waves. When Python did not find her, he returned to Parnassus. But Neptune brought the island of Ortygia up to a higher position; it was later called the island of Delos. There Latona, clinging to an olive tree, bore Apollo and Diana, to whom Vulcan gave arrows as gifts. Four days after they were born, Apollo exacted vengeance for his mother. He went to Parnassus and slew Python with his arrows. (Because of this deed he is called Pythian.) He put Python's bones in a caldron, deposited them in his temple and instituted funeral games for him which are called Pythian.[1]

The features which are comparable to Rev. 12 are as follows: the woman-goddess, the child to be born, the dragon-enemy pursuing the mother because of the child, the rescue of the mother by a place being prepared for her, and the absence of the father from active involvement in the story. This list is mine; Dieterich only says that the similarities are obvious.

Zielinski has pointed to another possible similarity. In Apoc. 12 the woman is saved from the dragon by the wings of an eagle. In Hyginus, Leto is saved by the wind, Aquilo. The Latin word for eagle is aquila. Since Hyginus writes in Latin, Zielinski poses the question as to whether or not the similarity in

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[1]The Myths of Hyginus, trans. and ed. by Mary Grant (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1960), pp. 115-16.

the names of the agents of deliverance is due to bare chance. He refuses to answer the question.[1] My judgement is that this similarity must be taken as happenstance unless it can be shown, in addition to the evidence necessary to establish John's usage of this myth, that (1) Hyginus could have had access to a version of the story which included an eagle or (2) John had a reason to change the wind to an eagle.

The similarities between the major figures of the two stories are matched by some large differences. There is no celestial aspect to the Leto-Apollo story. The pursuit of Leto is before the birth while in Rev. 12 it comes after. The character of the two dragons is different. Python is an earth dragon who gives oracles, and who is defeated first by the action of Neptune; the dragon in Rev. 12 uses water to trap the woman and is defeated by the action of the earth in swallowing up the water. One other difference is in what happens after the birth of the child. Apollo, four days after his birth, slays Python; in Rev. 12 the newly born child plays no role in the story after his birth, and the battle is between the dragon and Michael.

Allo is not sure that it is necessary to go outside of the OT and NT to explain the imagery of Rev. 12. However, if it is necessary, then he would choose the myth of Leto-Apollo over all other suggested sources.[2] We bring up Pere Allo at this point primarily because of his suggestion relating to the last mentioned

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[1]Thaddaeus Zielinski, "Die griechischen Quellen der Apokalypse", Forschungen und Fortschritte 7 (1931), pp. 155-56.

[2]E. - B. Allo, Saint Jean L'Apocalypse (3rd ed.; Paris: Libraire Lecoffre, 1933), Excursus XXIX, pp. 187-99.

dissimilarity on the role of the child. Allo follows a route explored first by Gunkel in the wilds of Babylonian mythology. Gunkel argued that the child born in Rev. 12 grows up in the next few chapters and returns as the conqueror in Rev. 19.[1] Allo argues, in a similar way, that the conqueror in Apoc. 19 is an Apollonian figure.[2] If this suggestion by Allo is correct then we have an author who has adapted a myth by making it bracket a good portion of his work and who is not bound by the sequence of the myth but can explode it to make it suit his purpose.

We now have before us something of the discussion on the relation of Rev. 12 to the myth of the birth of Apollo. The similarities are clearly sufficient to warrant our examining for ourselves the primary evidence for the myth.

II. The Primary Evidence

We will approach these primary sources, literary and non-literary, with two questions in mind: (1) is there evidence for variation in the telling of the myth which might correspond to Rev. 12, and (2) is there evidence for the myth, in whatever variation, in Asia Minor at the end of the first century A.D. To answer these questions, we will follow the historical development of the myth.

A. Literary[3]

1. Homeric Hymn to Apollo[4]

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[1] Gunkel, Schoepfung und Chaos, pp. 178 ff.

[2] Allo, Saint Jean, p. 190.

[3] References to the Greek literature were taken either from Schreiber, Apollon Pythoktonos, or from Wehrli's article on "Leto" in Pauly-W., Supplementband V, pp. 555-76.

[4] Homeric Hymns III (to Delian Apollo) and IV (to Pythian Apollo) in Hesiod. The Homeric Hymns; The Loeb Classical Library, trans. by Hugh G. Evelyn-White (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1914).

In the earliest of the literary sources, we find the elements of the myth according to Hyginus separated into two discreet myths. The Homeric Hymn to Apollo is made up of two hymns, one of the Delian Apollo and the other to the Pythian Apollo.[1] In the first there is the story of the birth of Apollo on the island of Delos. There is no threat to Leto from a dragon or from anything else; the only problem is the need for a birthplace. Ortygia is not the same place as Delos, although Hyginus equates the two; Artemis is born on Ortygia, Apollo on Delos (lines 14-18). The role of the sea is different from that in Hyginus; the waves, instead of protection, are a threat to Leto (1.25 ff). The reason that Delos is chosen is that it alone of all the places which Leto searched was not afraid of the might of Apollo (1.40 ff). As Leto, clinging to a palm tree, gives birth to Apollo, the earth laughs for joy (1.115 ff). In this story of Apollo's birth there is no mention of a dragon.

The second hymn, tied to a different locale, takes place as Apollo is grown. Apollo is looking all over the earth for a place to establish his oracle (lines 214 ff), and he comes to Crise beneath Mt. Parnassus and decides to build his temple there. Near a spring he confronts a dragoness (1.300 ff) who is evil because she has given plagues to men. Apollo slays the dragoness. Lines 305-355

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[1] H. J. Rose, A Handbook of Greek Literature (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1942) pp. 53-4, judges the Hymn to Apollo of Delos to be the earlier and the hymn to Apollo of Pytho, or Delphi, to be a kind of imitation of the earlier. He also sets the date as perhaps the 8th to the 7th centuries B.C.

have been described as an insertion,[1] and it is easy to see why. The story is broken off, and the subject becomes the dragoness receiving Typhaeon from Hera and Typhaeon becoming a plague to men. The story then resumes by describing the death pangs of the dragoness (1.356 ff). Apollo commands her to rot (pytheu); the earth and the sun cause her to rot, and so the place is called Pytho, and Apollo is called Pythian. The dragon goes unnamed throughout this hymn, but the repeated emphasis on the root, pyth-, at least raises the possibility of the name Python. In this myth of the slaying of the dragon, Leto plays no part.

2. Theognis and Pindar[2]

This division into two separate myths, the one of the birth and the other of the dragon slaying, is carried into the later literature. In his five line hymn-address to Phoebus Apollo, Theognis makes no mention of the dragon, but only of the birth of Delos. Pindar in his Processional Song for Delos likewise omits the dragon; again the only threat is from the sea, and here the earth comes to the rescue by sending up four pillars to support the island. Pindar clearly knows of Apollo's connection to Pytho and its oracles,[3] but he does not associate them with his birth.

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[1]Schreiber, Apollon Pythoktonos, pp. 2 ff.

[2]Theognis, lines 1-10, in E. Harrison, Studies in Theognis (Cambridge: University Press, 1902). His dates are in the 6th cent. B. C. Pindar, Processional Song: On Delos, in The Odes of Pindar, The Loeb Classical Library, trans. by Sir John Sandys (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961). Pindar's dates are the end of the 6th and beginning of the 5th cent. B. C.

[3]Pythian Odes IV, 5 and VII, 10.

3. Herodotus[1]

Herodotus gives us an unusual account of the town of Buto, in Egypt, where there is an oracle of Leto.[2] Near this oracle there is an island, Chemnis, on which is a shrine to Apollo and three palm trees; the island floats. The floating island we found in Pindar, and the palm trees were in the Homeric Hymn. From these, it seems that Herodotus is trying to relate this Egyptian island to the birth of Apollo in Delos. However the intermixture of elements from Egyptian stories make it impossible to tell what version of the birth of Apollo Herodotus may have been working with. In this account no birth is spoken of; Leto is not Apollo's mother, she merely hides him because Typhon is looking for him. In this story he is the son of Osiris. The presence of the dragon and his pursuit of the child call to mind the later form of the Apollo myth as we have it in Hyginus, although here the dragon does not pursue the woman at all. Because of all these difficulties, Herodotus' account cannot stand as evidence for the merger of the myths of the Delian and the Pythian Apollo prior to his time. It could, conceivably, serve as a spur for such a merger by mixing in the Egyptian story of Horus. If it did serve as such, there is no literary evidence left to attest the merger from this period. However, the non-literary evidence, to be considered later, gives us additional evidence.

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[1] Herodotus II, 156-57, in Herodotus, Loeb Classical Library, vol. 1, trans. by A.D. Godley (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1921). His dates are in the 5th cent. B. C.

[2] This place and temple are attested also in Strabo, 802, in The Geography of Strabo, The Loeb Classical Library, vol. 8, trans. by H. L. Jones (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1932), pp. 66-7.

4. Euripides[1]

Euripides gives the earliest account of a partial merger of these two myths. The extent of the joining is that it is the baby Apollo who slays the dragon immediately, or so it seems, after Leto takes him from Delos. The merger is not complete, and shows no trace of an influence like that of Herodotus' story, because there is no mention of the dragon's pursuing the woman or the child. The motive for the slaying of the dragon is not revenge on the dragon for her persecution; rather it is so that Apollo can take over the oracle of the earth which the dragon seems to be guarding.

5. Callimachus[2]

Callimachus goes back to the pattern of the Homeric Hymns. He offers one hymn to Apollo, and at the end of the hymn there is a brief section addressed to Apollo in the second person which extols his killing of the serpent. In this hymn as a whole there is only the most vague of references to Apollo's birth, and in the particular section having to do with the dragon there is no mention of the birth at all. Callimachus has also an entirely separate hymn to Delos which deals with the birth of Apollo in detail and contains many of the same elements as in the Homeric Hymn to the Delian Apollo; in this hymn there is no mention of a dragon. There

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[1]Euripides, "Iphigenia in Taurus", 1234 ff, in Euripides, The Loeb Classical Library, vol. 2, trans., by A. S. Way (New York: Macmillan, 1912). Euripedes lived in the 5th cent. B. C.

[2]Callimachus, Hymn to Apollo and Hymn to Delos, in Callimachus, Lycophron, Aratus, Loeb Classical Library, trans. by A. W. Mair (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960). Callimachus wrote in the 3rd cent. B. C.

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is a threat to Leto, but that threat is the wrath of Hera who is jealous that Leto is bearing a child of Zeus. There is a brief mention of the dragon-slaying (lines 90 ff), but it is no more than the prophecy of Apollo from the womb that the serpent at Pytho will die. In the course of Leto's wanderings, Callimachus has Apollo make several prophecies which have nothing to do with the story of his birth.

6. Apollodorus, Plutarch, and Pausanias[1]

In Apollodorus the two myths are placed together, one following the other, in a brief account with no detail. Still there is no interaction between the two, such as the dragon's pursuing Leto, and it seems that Apollo is grown when he slays the dragon.

Plutarch, perhaps because of his location at Delphi, is concerned not at all with the birth myth. He deals with the slaying, with the dragon as good or evil, and with Apollo's having to be purified for the slaying (On the Obsolescence of Oracles, 15). In the same passage he acknowledges and emphatically rejects the theory that Apollo killed the dragon to take over the oracle; this theory we have met in Euripides. Plutarch mentions the birth, but has the place of birth as

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[1]Apollodorus I, IV, 1, in Apollodorus, The Library, The Loeb Classical Library, vol. 1, trans. by James G. Frazer (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961). Apollodorus' dates are perhaps in the first centuries, B. C. and A. D.

Plutarch, "On Isis and Osiris" and "On the Obsolescence of Oracles" in Plutarch's Moralia, Loeb Classical Library, vol. V, trans. by F. C. Babbitt (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962). See also "The Greek Questions" in vol. IV and "On Music" in vol. XIV. Plutarch wrote in the 1st cent. A. D.

Pausanias, II, 7, 7; II, 30, 3; X, 6, 5; and X, 7, 2, in Pausanias, Description of Greece, Loeb Classical Library, trans. by W. H. S. Jones (4 vols.; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964). Pausanias wrote in the 2nd cent. A. D.

Tegyra (Obs. of Orac., 5). In On Isis and Osiris Plutarch identifies Apollo with Horus; Isis is the mother of Horus, and yet Isis is identified with Athena or Demeter, but not with Leto.[1] So it seems that Plutarch is little concerned with the mother of Apollo.

Pausanias also writes of the struggle of Apollo with Python and of Apollo's being purified, but draws no connection to the birth.

7. Lucian and Hyginus[2]

It is only in Lucian and Hyginus that we find the merger of these two stories so that the pursuit of Leto is by the dragon and Apollo's slaying of the dragon is an act of vengenace which takes place shortly after birth. Hyginus alone adds the touch that it was Python who was the giver of the oracles and not just the guardian of the oracle.

The question must now arise as to how early this merged version existed. From the character of Hyginus' writings I would guess that anything original in his work would have to come from a mistake rather than his intention. So we must assume that it existed before Hyginus. Lucian does not seem to be presenting something new, rather to be holding up the motive of Hera and the flight of Leto to jest.

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[1] On Isis and Osiris 354c, 377a.

[2] Lucian, Dialogues of the Sea Gods 9 (10), in Lucian, The Loeb Classical Library, vol. 7, trans. by M. D. Macleod (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961). See the supplement to this chapter. Lucian wrote in the 2nd cent. A. D.

Hyginus, Fabulae, 140, in The Myths of Hyginus, trans. and ed. by Mary Grant. See the earlier part of this chapter.

So the story must have been known to him and his readers. Even so we have no literary evidence that the myth as Lucian and Hyginus have it, existed in the last part of the first century A.D. Also if this myth were in existence but fairly young, the chances for its being widely known are not good. In all there is little support to this point for using these two documents from the second century A.D. to explain Rev. 12.

At best the literary evidence leaves us with a question which is not easily decided. The evidence from coins and vases helps us to make the decision.

B. Non-Literary

Schreiber cites two statues and some reports of works of art, all of which are from Roman times and which represent Leto fleeing. He uses these to argue for the only form of the myth which he recognizes, that of the merged birth and dragon-slaying myth.[1] In fact, each of the works cited refer either to the birth or to the dragon battle, but not to both. From the perspective of the historical development of the myths, the most important evidence which Schreiber has is in his last chapter. There he describes two vases, one a black-figured work and the other red-figured.[2] It is not necessary for our purposes to decide which portion of the sixth or fifth centuries B. C. these vases come from. It is enough to note that

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[1] Schreiber, Apollon Pythoktonos, pp. 67-79.

[2] Ibid., pp. 90-95. The only reproductions available to me are those in black and white from Ch. Lenormant and J. De Witte, Élite de Monuments Ceramographiques (Paris: Leleux, 1857) vol. II, plates I and IA, so I am dependent on Schreiber for the distinctions between the black and red figured vases.

these styles of vase painting belong to the classic period of Greece.[1] All of this is important because both of the vases show Leto with Apollo as a baby in conjunction with the dragon.

As Schreiber points out, one of these paintings[2] seems to be of a rocky place which could be intended as Delphi.[3] If this is the case, then the two forms of the myth have been merged by moving the place of birth to the place where the dragon is slain. In the other vase-painting[4] there is no twin for Apollo, rather there is a second full grown female in addition to Leto. This could be Artemis or it could be another goddess such as Eilytheia.[5] Apollo is recognizable because of his bow, and the palm trees indicate a connection to the birth place, whether Ortygia or Delos. In this case, Plate IA, the locale of the dragon-battle has been transferred from Delphi to the birth place. These two vase paintings show that the separate myths were merged as early as the sixth or fifth century B.C.

This time is not far from the account of Herodotus which used stories connected with both Apollo and Horus. We must allow for the possibility that the merger of the two myths of Apollo, the birth and the dragon-slaying, into one took place because of the influence of the Egyptian story of the dragon's pursuit of the child Horus. If this influence was the cause of the merger, there is no reflection,

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[1]See, for example, Arthur Lane, Greek Pottery (London: Faber and Faber, 1961), pp. 19 f.

[2]See the supplement to this chapter, Plate I.

[3]Schreiber, Apollon Pythoktonos, p. 91.

[4]See the supplement to this chapter, Plate IA.

[5]See the Homeric Hymn to the Delian Apollo, 110 ff.

in either literary or non-literary evidence, of any memory of this Horus influence. The merged form was attached to Apollo completely without further mention of Horus, Isis, or Typhon.

The merger of the myths on both of these vases goes beyond what we saw in Euripides. In the first, Plate I, Leto is shown fleeing from the dragon, and this was not envisioned by Euripides. The second, Plate IA, might seem to be nearly an illustration of Euripides' description of the babe Apollo's slaying the dragon. However in Euripides the slaughter was near Parnassus, and in Plate IA, as indicated by the palm trees, the locale is intended to be the birth place of Apollo and not the lair of the dragon. The situation implies that the dragon had pursued Leto and Apollo to this place.

The continuance of the myth in this merged form is shown by the coins which Schreiber has assembled.[1] Out of the dozen coins which show the figure of Leto fleeing and holding to her two children, there are four coins which gave away the identity of the pursuer, who is not portrayed on any of the coins. On the four coins in question, the child Apollo has a bow and/or arrows. These could be intended for use only against the dragon, not against Hera, and these are the only two options. All four of these coins are from the middle of the third century A.D.

These four coins together with the vase paintings help us to understand the slightly different representations on the other eight coins. Leto is fleeing with her two children, but there is no hint as to the identity of the pursuer.

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[1] Apollon Pythoktonos, pp. 79-85.

The two vases and the four coins, the former from a period before and the latter coming after, give us strong evidence for identifying the absent pursuer as Python.

The place of origin of these coins, all twelve of them, is important since they are all from Asia Minor. Three are from Ephesus, three from Miletus, three from Tripoli, and the other three from further inland. The earliest of these coins is from the time of Hadrian, having the Emperor's name inscribed on one side, and that of Leto on the side with the representation of the woman and children fleeing. This particular coin is from Ephesus.

The non-literary evidence collected by Schreiber argues for the existence of the myth, in a form something like that described in Lucian and Hyginus, in Asia Minor toward the end of the first century A.D.

Now we must ask about the evidence for the availability and currency of the myth. Of direct importance is the claim of Ephesus to be the birthplace of Apollo. A grove outside of Ephesus was named Ortygia and was claimed as the Ortygia in the legends of Apollo's birth.[1] Also, Schreiber reports that there was a temple at Ephesus to Apollo Pythios.[2]

There is further evidence from coins that is of a more indirect nature, since the coins testify to the honoring of Apollo in some forms other than those of the child and the dragon slayer. Since we have established that Apollo was known

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[1]Tacitus, Annals III, 61, and Strabo XIV, 1, 20. See also Wehrli, "Leto", in Pauly-W., Suppl. V, pp. 555-58.

[2]Apollon Pythoktonos, p. 48. The date of the temple is not given.

in just those forms in Asia Minor, the presence of Apollo in other forms is of some importance because of the possibility that these two myths could be attached to other forms of Apollo.

We have already discussed coins which testify to the presence of Apollo in Ephesus. In Pergamum a coin from the time of Antoninus has Asclepius and Apollo Smintheus together.[1] From Smyrna there are coins throughout the last four centuries B.C. which bear the head of Apollo, but apparently there are none from Imperial times.[2] In Philadelphia, a coin from Imperial times was found with Apollo having his head radiant, and another with Domitian on the obverse and Apollo on the reverse.[3] From Sardis there is a coin with Nero on one side, and Apollo standing on the other.[4] Thyatira, at the time of Trajan or Hadrian, produced a coin showing Apollo Tyrimnaios holding a double axe on his left shoulder.[5] From Laodicea at the time of Augustus, a coin has on one side Apollo with lyre and laurel and on the other a serpent winding around an altar which has the headdress of Isis on the top.[6]

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[1]F. Imhoof-Blumer, Monnaies Grecques (Amsterdam: Johannes Mueller, 1883), #142.

[2]Barclay V. Head, Historia Numorum (Oxford: Henry Frowde, 1911), pp. 591 ff.

[3]Barclay V. Head, Catalogue of the Greek Coins in the British Museum: Lydia (London: British Museum, 1901), p. 191, #33; p. 197, #61.

[4]Ibid., p. 244, #68.

[5]Ibid., p. 294, #13.

[6]Barclay V. Head, Catalogue of the Greek Coins in the British Museum: Phrygia (London: British Museum, 1906), p. 288, #61-63.

The conclusion must be that the god Apollo was known throughout the cities to which the Apocalypse was addressed and the myth of his birth to Leto and of his battle with Python was known throughout the world of the Roman Empire, but especially in Asia Minor. The further conclusion, on the question of the form of the myth, must be that it was available in the merged form, as in Lucian, Hyginus, and the coins, and also in the two separate forms, as in Plutarch and Pausanias.

III. A New Assessment of the Relation to Apocalypse 12

With this evidence assembled we can now ask again after differences between Rev. 12 and the Leto-Apollo-Python myth. There is still no celestial aspect to the Apollo myth(s).[1] However the difference spoken of earlier between Leto's fleeing before the birth and the flight of the woman in Rev. 12 after the birth can be seen in a different light. The vases, sculpture, and coins along with the account in Euripides indicate that Leto does flee after the birth, although she does carry her child with her. It could be objected that there is nothing in Rev. 12 to match the pre-natal flight of Leto. However we have argued that a complete takeover of all parts of a myth is not necessary, and since the flight does occur in

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[1] Boll, Aus. d. Off. Joh., pp. 107 ff, could find no convincing evidence of Leto or Apollo connected to astral phenomena. The reference by Boll to Leto's association with the night is based only on speculation by Lewy, in his book on Semitic loan words, that Leto comes from the Semitic form lātāh, "die umhuellende (Nacht)". See Otto Gruppe, Griechische Mythologie und Religionsgeschichte, 2 vols.; Handbuch der klassischen Altertums-Wissenschaft 5:2 (Munich: C. H. Beck' sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1906), II, p. 1248. At the time he wrote, Boll had access to seven volumes of the Catalogus Codicum Astrologorum Graecorum and a portion of the eighth. My own work in the other part of vol. 8 and in 10-12 confirms his conclusion. Also, I find no evidence to dispute this in Aratus, Hipparchus, or Ps. Eratosthenes. It is of interest that Hyginus, who has an interest in astral mythology, equates Virgo with Dike, Demeter, and Erigone, but not Leto. See Grant, The Myths of Hyginus, p. 215.

both the myth and Rev. 12 in a similar form, it carries no weight to object that Rev. 12 does not incorporate every aspect of the Leto-Apollo myth.

The arguments based on the character of the dragon must also be re-examined. The arguments, stated most plainly by Allo[1], are two: (1) the dragon Python is an earth-god while the dragon in Rev. 12 is connected to the water, by the stream which he spews from his mouth, and (2) the dragon Python is good not evil. We will deal with each of these objections in turn.

Dieterich writes of the question of the different roles of the earth and sea, or just water, within the myth and Rev. 12. He offers an explanation that there must have been a version of the Leto-Apollo myth in which the dragon stirred up the waters of the underworld, and Leto was saved from the waters by the earth's pushing up the island of Delos.[2] This is not far from the story which we found in Pindar. The dragon plays no part in that birth story, but the island of Delos was threatened by the sea, since it was free floating, and four pillars came up from the earth to steady her so that Leto might give birth. In the birth myths, apart from the dragon, the earth often laughs and rejoices.[3] In Euripides, Leto is threatened by the sea. In all of these versions, the roles of the earth and the sea are quite similar to those in Rev. 12.

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[1] Saint Jean, p. 197.

[2] Dieterich, Abraxas, p. 120.

[3] Hom. Hymn III, 115 ff; Theognis; and Callimachus IV, 259 ff.

In the sections dealing with the dragon proper, it is clear that he never appears as a sea- or water-monster, and that he is at least once identified with the earth.[1] In the oldest source, however, the dragon lives by a spring of water, and after he, or she, is slain, the earth along with the sun cause her to rot.[2]

So the assumed identification of the dragon with the earth is not at all consistent. Also, the motif of the earth's helping the woman and opposing the dragon is present in some of the earlier forms of the myth. It should also be noted that the dragon in Rev. 12 is no sea monster. Although he does spew water from his mouth, he resides in the heaven or on the earth, and at the end of the chapter he goes to the edge of the sea to greet the beast from the sea, a creature separate from the dragon of Rev. 12.

So the evidence for the dragon Python as an earth god is inconsistent. Further, the evidence for the dragon's being good is almost non-existent. Part of Allo's argument is that the notion of the serpent as evil came into the Greek world only by the influence of the Egyptian Typhon. If we were to draw conclusions from the literary evidence, we would have to arrive at the very opposite of Allo's conclusion. The Homeric Hymn, the earliest source, portrays the dragon as evil, and it is only after Herodotus has given his rough equation of the dragon with Typhon that there is any good word spoken for the dragon, and that is in Euripides, to the effect that Python guards the oracle of the earth. The snake is still thought of as

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[1] Euripides, "Iphigenia in Taurus", 1257 ff.

[2] Homeric Hymn IV, 363 ff.

evil in Callimachus. We are not interested in drawing generalizations about the characteristics of dragons in differing cultures, rather in pointing out that in the case of Python, such generalizations do not apply. It is true that in Plutarch and Pausanias, Apollo had to be purified for the slaying of Python, but in Plutarch this aspect of the myth is used to counter the assertion, apparently prevalent in his time, that Python was no more than a brute creature.[1]

A similar opposition of opinion is reflected on the relation of the dragon to the oracle. In the same passage as above, Plutarch argues heavily against the notion that Apollo slew Python in order to take over the oracle for himself. Plutarch's argument betrays the strength of his opposition. However, Plutarch's position is made stronger in our eyes by the observation that in the Homeric Hymns there is no indication of the dragon's being associated with an oracle. It is only when we come to Hyginus that we hear of the dragon's giving oracles himself.

From all of this discussion, it is at least clear that the dragon got differing assessments within the first century A.D. The fact that the dragon was seen by some as good should prevent us from concluding that this myth was another example of the battle of the god of light with the god of darkness. However, there were some assessments of the dragon like that in Rev. 12: that he was a beast deserving to be slain.

We return now to the suggestion by Zielinski on the possible connection of Aquilo, the wind in Hyginus' account, and Aquila, the Latin word for eagle.

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[1] On the Obsolescence of Oracles, 15.

XUM

We must conclude that the similarity between the two words, which exists only in Latin, is only coincidence. There is no evidence that an eagle had a part in the Apollo myth, and we have seen that John used an Exodus tradition which included the eagle as the agent of deliverance.

We examine again the suggestion that John adapted the myth of Apollo by postponing the battle of Christ with the dragon until Rev. 19. It is clear that Christ does not do battle until the ultimate struggle. However, neither the coming of the Son of Man in Rev. 14 nor the battle with the beasts in Rev. 19 bears any trace of Apollo or his fight with Python. Also, this suggestion has little to offer in the way of understanding the dragon battle which does take place within Rev. 12, the battle of Michael with the dragon.

As we saw, in Chapter 2, a good argument can be made that Michael is the substitute for Christ. With this in mind, Michael's fight with the dragon could also be the counterpart of Apollo's battle with the dragon. If this is the case, then it seems that John has reshaped the Apollo myth so as to put the dragon-battle in the middle of the birth story. Because the dragon-slaying was on the one hand a part of the myth of the birth and on the other hand, in some cases, it was separated from the birth, such a reshuffling by John seems quite possible. As we examine the chapter again, however, we see that the dragon-battle does come at the proper place according to the myth, as in Hyginus's account: just after the birth. The reshaping which John did is not so much an insertion then as it is an extension of the enmity of the dragon and the woman, in addition to the substitution of Michael for Christ. In my judgement the dual form of the Apollo myth, the birth alone and the birth with the dragon slaying, provides an opportunity for John, or perhaps the

word should be license, to do his own reshaping, and it is a persuasive piece of evidence for its use in Rev. 12.

Questions as to why John would have reshaped the myth in this way are to be saved for Chapter 9. For now it is sufficient to see that such reshaping is possible and that the forms of the myths lend themselves to it.

The one question which we have dealt with only indirectly is the meaning of the Apollo myth. And even in our indirect dealings we have done no more than rule out suggested meanings.

A purely aetiological meaning must be held as unlikely. The earliest form of the myth has no mention of Apollo's taking over the oracle at Delphi. This explanation, connected with one oracle and why it came into existence, would hardly explain the myth's appearance in several forms and places. It is true that Hyginus interprets the myth in this way, but this must be taken as a misinterpretation since Plutarch, who was at Delphi, opposes such a meaning.

We have also ruled out the possibility that this was a form of the battle of the god of light and the god of darkness. This form is tempting because Apollo is often identified with the sun.[1] The difficulty with this approach is that the dragon does not always appear as an evil force, and is nowhere identified with the darkness.

This would be the place to analyze the literary sources which might give away the meaning of the myth. However the only two sources which give the myth in its merged form are Lucian and Hyginus. Hyginus, as we have said, understands

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[1] See the articles on "Apollon" by Wernicke in Pauly-W., vol. 2, and by Roscher in W. H. Roscher, Ausfuerliches Lexikon der griechischen und roemischen Mythologie, vol. I. 1 (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1965), pp. 422 ff.

the story as aetiological -- why Apollo has an oracle at Delphi and why there are Pythian games. Lucian is of no help either since he seems to be playing the story for humor, holding up as ridiculous the motives of Hera and the flight of Leto. We are unfortunately left in the dark, based on the evidence we have seen, as to the meaning which this myth of Apollo's birth and dragon-slaying carried with it.

One might well suspect that whatever portions of reality they illuminated, these meanings had been forgotten by the time that the two could be mixed and merged.

Apart from these myths in particular, the figure of Apollo acquired at least two roles which would have provided a reason for John's taking over his myths. The first is that Apollo was expected to be the ruler of the coming Golden Age.[1] The possible connection with John's eschatology is obvious. The second role has to do with certain Emperors' claiming the title of Apollo. This possibility we will discuss under Chapter 6.

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[1]See the Fourth Ecòlgue of Virgil.

SUPPLEMENT

TO CHAPTER FOUR

I. Pindar, Processional Song on Delos, from the Odes of Pindar, The Loeb Classical Library, trans. by Sir John Sandys (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961).

II. Euripides, "Iphigenia in Taurus", in Euripides, The Loeb Classical Library, vol. II, trans. by A. S. Way (New York: Macmillan, 1912), lines 1234 ff.

III. Lucian, Dialogues of the Sea-Gods, 9 (10), in Lucian, The Loeb Classical Library, vol. VII, trans. by M. D. MacLeod (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961).

IV. Plates I and IA from Ch. Lenormant and J. DeWitte, Élite de Monuments Ceramographiques (Paris: Leleux, 1857), vol. II.

ΠΡΟΣΟΔΙΑ

The *Prosodia*, or "Processional Songs," were sung to the accompaniment of the flute.

ΕΙΣ ΔΗΛΟΝ

87 + 88 (58)

(*a*) στρ.

Χαῖρ', ὦ θεοδμάτα, λιπαροπλοκάμου
παίδεσσι Λατοῦς ἱμεροέστατον ἔρνος,
πόντου θύγατερ, χθονὸς εὐρείας ἀκίνητον τέρας·
ἄντε βροτοὶ
Δᾶλον κικλήσκοισιν, μάκαρες δ' ἀν 'Ολύμπῳ
τηλέφατον
κυανέας χθονὸς ἄστρον . . . . . .
. . . . . .
. . . . . .
. . . . . .

ἀντ.

. . . . . .
. . . . . .

(*b*) ἦν γὰρ τὸ πάροιθε φορηταὶ κυμάτεσσιν παντοδαπῶν
ἀνέμων
ῥιπαῖσιν· ἀλλ' ἁ Κοιογενὴς ὀπότ' ὠδίνεσσι θυίοις'
ἀγχιτόκοις ἐπέβα νιν, δὴ τότε τέσσαρες ὀρθαὶ
πρέμνων δρουσαν χθονίων,
ἀν δ' ἐπικράνοις σχέθον πέτραν ἀδαμαντοπέδιλοι
κίονες· ἔνθα τεκοῖσ' εὐδαίμον' ἐπόψατο γένναν.

(*a*) Theophrastus in Pseudo-Philo, περὶ ἀφθαρσίας κόσμου, 23.
(*b*) Strabo x 485.

6 παντοδαπῶν Wilamowitz : παντοδαπῶν <τ'> Schneider (edd.).

PROCESSIONAL SONGS

On Delos

Hail, O heaven-built isle, most lovely scion of the children of bright-haired Lêto, O daughter of the sea, thou unmoved[1] marvel of the spacious earth, by mortal men called Dêlos, but by the blessed gods of Olympus known as the far-seen star of the dark-blue earth . . .[2]

[1] In contrast to the tradition (first found in Pindar) that it was a floating island until the visit of Lêtô. This seems better than the rendering "unshaken by earthquake" discussed in Smyth's *Greek Melic Poets*, p. 364 f. There was an earthquake in 490 B.C., in fulfilment of the oracle, κινήσω καὶ Δῆλον ἀκίνητόν περ ἐοῦσαν (Herodotus, vi 98).

[2] "Wie grossartig ist die Vorstellung, dass die Erde für den Blick der Götter eine blaue Fläche ist, wie ihr Himmel für uns, auf dem ihnen dann Delos, so klein sie ist, als ein heller Stern lieblich aufleuchtet. Wer an sprachlicher Kunst als solcher Gefallen findet, wird hier ein Juwel, einen seltenen Edelstein in reichster Fassung anerkennen" (Wilamowitz, *Sappho und Simonides*, 1913, p. 131).

For aforetime, that isle was tossed on the waves by all manner of whirling winds; but, when Lêtô, the daughter of Coeüs, in the frenzy of her imminent pangs of travail, set foot on her, then it was that four lofty pillars rose from the roots of earth, and on their capitals held up the rock with their adamantine bases. There it was that she gave birth to, and beheld, her blessed offspring.

7 ἀλλ' ἁ Κοιογένης Schneider (edd.) : αλλαποιογενης.
8 ἐπέβα νιν Porson (edd.) : ἐπιβαίνεν.
9 ἔρνεσαν S : ἐπόρουσαν.

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I.

ΧΟΡΟΣ

εὔπαις ὁ Λατοῦς γόνος,
ὃν ποτε Δηλιάσιν

388

CHORUS[1]

A glorious babe in the days of old (*Str.*)
Leto in Delos bare,

[1] Apollo's oracle was now proved right, and Iphigeneia's son wrong; so this ode celebrates the institution of that oracle, and the abolition of the ancient dream-oracles.

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ΙΦΙΓΕΝΕΙΑ Η ΕΝ ΤΑΥΡΟΙΣ

καρποφόροις γυάλοις
[ἔτικτε] χρυσοκόμαν
ἐν κιθάρᾳ σοφόν, ᾗ[1] τ' ἐπὶ τόξων
εὐστοχίᾳ γάνυται, φέρε δ' ἶνιν
ἀπὸ δειράδος εἰναλίας,
λοχεῖα κλεινὰ λιποῦσ'
ἀστάκτων ματέρ' εἰς ὑδάτων,
τὰν βακχεύουσαν Διονύσῳ
Παρνάσιον κορυφάν,
ὅθι ποικιλόνωτος αἰνωπὸς δράκων
σκιερᾷ κατάχαλκος εὐφύλλῳ δάφνᾳ,
γᾶς πελώριον τέρας, ἄμφεπε
μαντεῖον χθόνιον.

ἔτι μιν ἔτι βρέφος, ἔτι φίλας
ἐπὶ ματέρος ἀγκάλαισι θρῴσκων,
ἔκανες, ὦ Φοῖβε, μαν-
τείων δ' ἐπέβας ζαθέων,
τρίποδί τ' ἐν χρυσέῳ
θάσσεις, ἐν ἀψευδεῖ θρόνῳ
μαντείας βροτοῖς
θεσφάτων νέμων
ἀδύτων ὕπο, Κασταλίας ῥεέθρων
γείτων, μέσον γᾶς ἔχων μέλαθρον.

IPHIGENEIA IN TAURICA

Mid its valleys of fruitage manifold,
The babe of the golden hair,—
Lord of the harp sweet-ringing, king of the bow sure-winging
The shaft that he loveth well,—and she fled from the rock by the swell
Of the sea encompassed, bringing
From the place where her travail befell
Her babe to the height whence rolled the gushing rills untold,
Where the Wine-god's revels stormy-souled
O'er the crests of Parnassus fare;
Where, gleaming with coils iridescent, half-hiding
The glint of his mail 'neath the dense-shadowed bay,
Was the earth-spawned monster, the dragon, gliding
Round the chasm wherein earth's oracle lay.
But thou, who wast yet but a babe, yet leaping
Babe-like in thy mother's loving embrace,
Thou, Phoebus, didst slay him, didst take for thine
The oracle's lordship, the right divine,
And still on the tripod of gold art keeping
Thy session, dispensing to us, to the race
Of men, revelation of heaven's design.
From thy throne of truth, from the secret shrine,
By the streams through Castaly's cleft up-sweeping,
Where the Heart of the World is thy dwelling-place.

πατάξας τῇ τριαίνῃ τὴν πέτραν πλησίον τοῦ κλύσματος, καὶ σὺ εὐδαίμων ἔσῃ καὶ μόνη τῶν ἀδελφῶν οὐχ ὑδροφορήσεις ἀποθανοῦσα.

9 (10)

ΙΡΙΔΟΣ ΚΑΙ ΠΟΣΕΙΔΩΝΟΣ

ΙΡΙΣ

1. Τὴν νῆσον τὴν πλανωμένην, ὦ Πόσειδον, ἣν ἀποσπασθεῖσαν τῆς Σικελίας ὕφαλον ἔτι νήχεσθαι[1] συμβέβηκεν, ταύτην, φησὶν ὁ Ζεύς, στῆσον ἤδη καὶ ἀνάφηνον καὶ ποίησον ἤδη δῆλον ἐν τῷ Αἰγαίῳ μέσῳ βεβαίως μένειν στηρίξας πάνυ ἀσφαλῶς· δεῖται γάρ τι αὐτῆς.

ΠΟΣΕΙΔΩΝ

Πεπράξεται ταῦτα, ὦ Ἶρι. τίνα δ' ὅμως παρέξει τὴν χρείαν αὐτῷ ἀναφανεῖσα καὶ μηκέτι πλέουσα;

ΙΡΙΣ

Τὴν Λητὼ ἐπ' αὐτῆς δεῖ ἀποκνῆσαι· ἤδη δὲ πονήρως ὑπὸ τῶν ὠδίνων ἔχει.

ΠΟΣΕΙΔΩΝ

Τί οὖν; οὐχ ἱκανὸς ὁ οὐρανὸς ἐντεκεῖν; εἰ δὲ μὴ οὗτος, ἀλλ' ἥ γε γῆ πᾶσα οὐκ ἂν ὑποδέξασθαι δύναιτο τὰς γονὰς αὐτῆς;

[1] ἔτι νήχεσθαι Hemsterhuys: ἐνηχεῖσθαι codd.

a fountain that will have your name. You'll be happy, and, unlike any of your sisters, you won't have to carry water after death.

9 (10)

IRIS AND POSEIDON

IRIS

That wandering island,[1] Poseidon, which was broken off from Sicily, and is still propelling itself about under water—Zeus says you are to make it stop now, and bring it into view. You are to fix it quite securely, and make it stand firm, clearly visible[2] from now on in the middle of the Aegean. He wants it for something.

POSEIDON

It will be done, Iris. But what use will it be to him by coming to light and ceasing its seafaring?

IRIS

Leto must be delivered upon it. She's already in distress from her birth pangs.

POSEIDON

What of it? Hasn't heaven room enough for bearing children? If not heaven, couldn't all the earth accommodate her for the birth?

[1] Pindar, Fr. 58 (followed by Callimachus, *Hymns*, IV, 35 ff.) tells how the island of Delos floated in the sea, till the time when it was moored by pillars to the sea-bed to enable Leto to bear Apollo and Artemis. The story may have originated from a doubtful interpretation of the Homeric *Hymn to Delian Apollo*, l. 73.

[2] For the etymology cf. Callimachus, *Hymns*, IV, 53.

ΙΡΙΣ

Οὔκ, ὦ Πόσειδον· ἡ Ἥρα γὰρ ὅρκῳ μεγάλῳ κατέλαβε τὴν γῆν, μὴ παρασχεῖν τῇ Λητοῖ τῶν ὠδίνων ὑποδοχήν. ἡ τοίνυν νῆσος αὕτη ἀνώμοτός ἐστιν· ἀφανὴς γὰρ ἦν.

ΠΟΣΕΙΔΩΝ

2. Συνίημι. στῆθι, ὦ νῆσε, καὶ ἀνάδυθι αὖθις ἐκ τοῦ βυθοῦ καὶ μηκέτι ὑποφέρου, ἀλλὰ βεβαίως μένε καὶ ὑπόδεξαι, ὦ εὐδαιμονεσάτη, τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ τὰ τέκνα δύο, τοὺς καλλίστους τῶν θεῶν· καὶ ὑμεῖς, ὦ Τρίτωνες, διαπορθμεύσατε τὴν Λητὼ ἐς αὐτήν· καὶ γαληνὰ ἅπαντα ἔστω. τὸν δράκοντα δέ, ὃς νῦν ἐξοιστρεῖ αὐτὴν φοβῶν, τὰ νεογνὰ ἐπειδὰν τεχθῇ, αὐτίκα μέτεισι καὶ τιμωρήσει τῇ μητρί. σὺ δὲ ἀπάγγελλε τῷ Διὶ ἅπαντα εἶναι εὐτρεπῆ· ἕστηκεν ἡ Δῆλος· ἡκέτω ἡ Λητὼ ἤδη καὶ τικτέτω.

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10 (11)

ΞΑΝΘΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΘΑΛΑΣΣΗΣ

ΞΑΝΘΟΣ

1. Δέξαι με, ὦ θάλασσα, δεινὰ πεπονθότα καὶ κατάσβεσόν μου τὰ τραύματα.

ΘΑΛΑΣΣΑ

Τί τοῦτο, ὦ Ξάνθε; τίς σε κατέκαυσεν;

ΞΑΝΘΟΣ

Ὁ Ἥφαιστος. ἀλλ' ἀπηνθράκωμαι ὅλος ὁ κακοδαίμων καὶ ζέω.

IRIS

No, Poseidon. Hera has laid the earth under strict oath not to give Leto anywhere for her travail; thus this island is not bound by the oath, for it was not visible.

POSEIDON

I see. Stop still, island. Come up again from the deep, and drift below the surface no more. Remain in a fixed position, and receive, most lucky of islands, my brother's two children, the most beautiful of all the gods. And you, Tritons, give Leto passage to the island, and let all be calm. And the moment the babes are born, they'll pursue the serpent that's now maddening Leto with fright, and exact vengeance for their mother. And you, Iris, go and tell Zeus that all is ready. Delos is stationary. Let Leto come now and have her children.

10 (11)

XANTHUS[1] AND SEA

XANTHUS

Take me to you, Sea, for I've suffered terribly. Please put a stop to my burning wounds.

SEA

What's this, Xanthus? Who has burnt you?

XANTHUS

Hephaestus. See how I've been charred to cinders all over, poor thing that I am, and am at boiling point.

[1] A river of the Troad, also called Scamander. See *Iliad*, XXI, 211 ff.

T. II.

PL.

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Lith. de Kaeppelin et C^ie

IV.

IV. Plate IA.

T. II. PL. I, A.

Lith. de Bonteau. A. Reyre.

CHAPTER FIVE

EGYPTIAN MYTHOLOGY

1. Secondary Works

A. Summary of Bousset's Argument

In the Egyptian myth which Bousset offers to explain Rev. 12 the principal figures are as follows: the mother of gods, Hathor or Isis, the young sun-god, Horus or Harpocrates, and the dragon, Seth or Typhon. The story is that Typhon kills Osiris -- his own brother and the husband of Isis; then Isis gives birth miraculously to Osiris' child, Horus, and the two flee to the island of Chemnis. There is an alternative turn to the story at this point; in one form Isis gives birth after she arrives at the island. The next step, coming after an unknown period of time, is that Horus slays Typhon to avenge his father's death.[1]

The sources for this myth are ancient Egyptian texts, especially an Osiris hymn,[2] and Plutarch's On Isis and Osiris. Bousset does not presume to know the source immediately available to the author of the Apoc., rather he contents himself with the assertion that John used some form of this myth, which

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[1]This summary is taken from Die Offenbarung Johannis, 1906, pp. 354-58.

[2]He refers to these Egyptian texts according to the way they are included in Brugsch, Religion und Mythologie der Aegypter.

he describes as a sun myth of the victory of the young god of light over the powers of darkness.

Bousset recognized that the difficulties in relating this myth to Rev. 12 are similar to those faced in dealing with the Apollo myth. In Rev. 12, for instance, the flight of the woman is after the child is born and largely without the child; in the Egyptian myth, on the other hand, the flight is either while pregnant or carrying the child. Bousset argues that the rescue of the child was transposed deliberately by the author of the Apoc. from being a result of the woman's flight to being an event prior to the flight. This was done in order to allow a place for the separate myth of Michael's struggle with the dragon and the dragon's being thrown out of heaven. This adaptation and weaving together impressed Bousset as a remarkable piece of work.

The advantages which Bousset can show for this myth over the Apollo myth are rather small. Bousset observes that the headdress of Isis included a sun-disk, so that she has a connection to the celestial apparel of the woman in Rev. 12. Also the dragon Typhon has a watery nature and so is comparable to the dragon of Rev. 12 who spews water from his mouth. Neither of these similarities is possessed by the Apollo myth.

B. Boll versus Freundorfer

As we saw in Chapter 3, Franz Boll wants to explain the major figures of Rev. 12 by means of constellation -- Virgo as the woman and Hydra as the dragon. These constellations do not, however, explain the interaction of these figures, such as their coming down to earth and the pursuit of the woman by the dragon.

Boll acknowledges this and so tries to explain the actions by an identification of these constellations with the figures of a myth showing similar actions. Boll knows the work of Dieterich on the Apollo myth, but, as we observed in the last chapter, he can find only the most meagre of connections between the figures of the Apollo myth and the celestial bodies. For the Egyptian myth he has found considerably more. He claims instances of Typhon's being localized in the heavens and offers proof that Isis was identified with Virgo. We will return to this proof. The picture in Rev. 12 of the queen of heaven giving birth to the Messiah is seen as the result of a chain of connections: the starting point is the parthenos of Isaiah 7, which is connected to the parthenos in the zodiac, and these are connected to Isis, who in turn is connected to her child, the young god of light.[1]

Freundorfer's objections to this identification of Isis with Virgo are not strong. He points out that Virgo is identified with several goddesses, not with Isis only, and that the instances of Isis carrying Horus, prevalent on coins and sculpture, do not provide a proper parallel to the pregnant woman of Rev. 12.[2] Boll does not need to show exact parallels or that Virgo is exclusively identified with Isis. All he needs to make his point is some evidence that Isis and Typhon were identified with Virgo and Hydra during the Hellenistic age. This identification would be strong evidence that the Isis-Horus myth was the one which John used, and it is this identification that we will look for as we examine the primary evidence.

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[1]Boll, Aus der Offenbarung Johannis, pp. 109-122.

[2]Freundorfer, Die Apokalypse des Apostels Johannes, p. 140.

II. Primary Evidence

We are mainly concerned with the evidence of the Hellenistic period from the area close to Asia Minor. In order to understand that material we will have to dip into the forms of the myths about Isis, Horus, and Seth as they appeared in Egypt prior to the Hellenistic period.

A. Forms of the Myth from Egypt

The text on which Bousset relies most heavily is an Osiris hymn from a tombstone of the 18th Dynasty--ca. 1550-1350. The important passages are excerpted here from Blackman's translation of Erman's translation.

> She that afforded him shade with her feather and with her wings created air, . . .
> She that revived the faintness of the Weary one, that took in his seed and provided an heir, that suckled the child in solitude, the place where he was being unknown. . . .
> The Ennead cried out full of joy:
> "Welcome, Horus, son of Osiris. . . .
> the son of Isis hath protected his father, and his name hath been made noble and excellent"[1]

A few of the motifs of Apoc. 12 are present here: the birth of the divine child, the wings, and the lonely place to which the woman goes. There are, however, many more difficulties: there is no dragon; Osiris, the father, plays an important role; and Horus does nothing but protect his father.

The myths involving Isis, Horus, and Seth are not confined to this one form; the variations listed by Roeder and Griffiths are all even further removed

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[1] Adolf Erman, The Literature of the Ancient Egyptians, trans. by A. M. Blackman from the 1923 ed. (London: Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1927), pp. 143-44.

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from Apoc. 12.[1] In their earliest forms Horus and Seth were not enemies but the divine prototypes of the helpers of the king--cleaning, crowning, instructing, and protecting him.[2] Seth becomes the enemy of both Osiris and Horus; one version of the dispute between Horus and Seth is that of a trial in which both are presented as men. This status of Horus as the equal of Seth is attested in several forms other than that of the trial.[3] Griffiths argues persuasively that the myth of Horus vs. Seth, in which Horus was the full grown equal of Seth, was originally separate from the Osiris myth, in which Horus was a child, the son of Osiris. A merger of these two forms, so that Seth opposes the child Horus, took place very early, but evidence of the confusion that remained is provided by a version of the struggle between Horus and Seth found in the temple at Edfu, which was dedicated to Horus and constructed in the Ptolemaic era: Horus, the son of Isis, is battling Seth and apparently not faring too well so Isis requests Horus of Edfu, the full-grown god/man, to rescue the child Horus.[4]

From my reading it seems that the most prevalent form of Horus is that of the reigning Pharaoh who slays his country's enemies, often in the form of Seth as a hippopotamus. This version is found as late as the temple at Edfu.[5]

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[1]Roeder, "Horus", in Paulys-Wissowa, v. 8, pp. 2433-2457. J. Gwyn Griffiths, The Conflict of Horus and Seth (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1960).

[2]Roeder, p. 2441.

[3]Conflict, pp. 8-15, 60-61.

[4]Roeder, p. 2449.

[5]Roeder, "Horus", p. 2440.

This small selection of the variation within the Horus vs. Seth stories is perhaps sufficient to show that "the mythology of these texts does not form a coherent whole. It is often confused, composite, and contradictory."[1]

B. Forms of the Myth from the Hellenistic World

1. Inscriptions and Coins

The figure of Horus appears less frequently in the Hellenistic, Greek-speaking world than it did in Egypt. One possible reason for this scarcity is that Isis was introduced into the Hellenistic world in the company of Sarapis and Anubis rather than that of Osiris and Horus. While Osiris and Horus were not eliminated, their predominant role in the cult and myth seems to have been diminished.[2] As a result we cannot be certain that everytime we see a representation of Isis it implies the myths of the birth of Horus and the battle with Seth. This situation with Isis is somewhat analogous to that with Apollo. Apollo appeared in many forms, and unless there was evidence for the myths of the birth to Leto and the struggle with Python, we did not assume their presence.

The distinction between the forms of the Isis cult with Sarapis and those with Osiris and Horus becomes important when we look at the evidence for the Isis cult in Asia Minor. Magie has done the hard work for us by discussing

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[1] Griffiths, Conflict, p. 1.

[2] Roeder, "Sarapis", Paulys-W., 2d series, vol. 1, pp. 2398-2423; Drexler, "Isis", in Roscher, Lexikon, II. 1, pp. 373 ff. David Magie, "Egyptian Deities in Asia Minor: In Inscriptions and Coins" American Journal of Archaeology 57, no. 3 (July, 1953), pp. 168 ff.

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the coins and inscriptions from Hellenistic and Roman times. From epigraphical evidence we can see that there were 21 places in Asia Minor and the islands near the coast where Sarapis and/or Isis were worshipped in Hellenistic times. By the time of the Empire the total is up to 37. When the numismatic evidence is added there are 118 cities in which Isis and Sarapis were known. Isis is not always present, however. The coins representing Sarapis alone far outnumber those of Isis; unlike her, he appears on the issues of practically all the cities which show the Egyptian deities.[1] The seven cities mentioned in the Apoc. provide good examples. Six of the seven have some evidence of the knowledge of Sarapis or Isis by the second century A.D. at the latest; the exception is Thyatira. Of these six only Philadelphia lacks the presence of either Sarapis or Anubis and only Philadelphia has a representation of Horus/Harpocrates in the arms of Isis -- that on a coin from the second century A.D.[2]

The only other evidence for the place of Horus in the Isis cults of Asia Minor is in the Isis aretology from Cyme. All that we get from this hymn-like work is that Isis is the mother of Horus the King.[3]

Throughout the rest of the Greek-speaking world there are many statues and carvings of Isis holding Harpocrates/ Horus.[4] It is difficult to decide whether

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[1] Magie, "Egyptian Deities", pp. 180-81.

[2] Ibid., pp. 174-83.

[3] Werner Peek, Der Isishymnos von Andros und verwandte Texte (Berlin: Weidmann, 1930), p. 122, line 8. See the discussion below on the astral forms of Isis.

[4] Drexler, "Isis", pp. 504-11.

or not these representations imply some story of the birth of Horus like that in the Osiris hymn quoted above. It is possible that the figure represents no more than the goddess's love for her child. The decision will have to be made on the basis of the literature -- whether or not such a birth story was generally available in the Hellenistic era.

2. Literature: Diodorus and Plutarch

From the literature of the Hellenistic period up to the time the Apoc. was written, there are, to my knowledge, only two accounts of Isis, Horus, and Typhon: those in Diodorus Siculus, Book I, and Plutarch's On Isis and Osiris[1].

Diodorus is not of immense help. Griffiths writes of Diodorus that "About half of what Diodorus says about Osiris is derived from what the Greeks used to say about Dionysus."[2] In one instance Diodorus seems quite careless with detail: generally Horus is the son of Osiris, but in one passage (I, 17) Apollo--the equivalent of Horus--is said to be the brother of Osiris.

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[1] Herodotus II, 156 tells of the birth of Apollo/Horus. However, when elements of the birth of Apollo are taken out (floating island, palm trees, presence of Leto, the pursuit of the dragon), all we have left that is clearly of Egyptian origin are the names of the island, Chemnis, the town, Buto, and the characters Horus and Typhon. We cannot tell how many of the elements which were in the Apollo story were also found in the Horus and Typhon story. Because of this the account of Herodotus is of no help to us in understanding the forms of the Egyptian myth available to the Greek-speaking Hellenistic world.

In Apuleius, Metamorphoses, where something on this subject might be expected, there is no mention of Horus or Typhon.

[2] Conflict, p. 100, n. 6.

The slaying of Typhon/Seth for the murder of Osiris is recited, but Horus is given a very small part:

> When Osiris was ruling over Egypt as its lawful king, he was murdered by his brother Typhon, a violent and impious man. . . .But Isis, the sister and wife of Osiris avenged his murder with the aid of (sunagonizomenou) her son Horus, and after slaying Typhon and his accomplices became queen of Egypt (anelousan . . . basileusai tes Aig.).[1]

The small part played by Horus here is about the same size as the part played by the Messiah in Apoc. 12. However here the child does apparently fight whereas in Apoc. 12 the child is only defended. Also the outcome of the struggle here cannot be related to Apoc. 12 in any fashion.

One other passage (I, 25, 5-6) tells of a drug of immortality which Isis uses to raise Horus from the dead. His death was caused by plots of the Titans, however, so I do not see how this could have any relation to Apoc. 12.

The story of Horus and Typhon in Plutarch is somewhat closer to Apoc. 12 than that in Diodorus. According to Plutarch Isis reassembled the pieces of Osiris's body and then went to her son Horus in the town of Buto. Typhon came there looking not for Horus but for Osiris's body. There is no struggle between Typhon and Horus; Horus seems to be of interest only because he would help Typhon to locate Osiris. Later, Osiris came back after his death to instruct Horus in battle so that he might avenge his father's death. This motif of coming back from

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[1] Diodorus of Sicily, Loeb Classical Library, trans. by C. H. Oldfather, I (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1946) p. 65. Book I. 21.

the dead, along with the request of Horus for a horse, have no parallel in the Egyptian texts.[1] The battle was long but Horus was the winner, and he delivered Typhon in chains to Isis. Isis then released Typhon, and this made Horus so mad that he took the crown from his mother's head and threw it on the ground. This is "doubtless a softened form of the story of her decapitation, to which Plutarch himself alludes."[2] There is a reference to the legal struggle of the two in that Typhon accused Horus of being illegitimate; the gods decided against Typhon. Finally two other battles between Horus and Typhon are mentioned; in both Typhon is defeated.[3]

One other note that is similar to Apoc. 12: throughout the rest of the essay Typhon is often referred to as being red.[4]

It seems that if Horus and Isis are to be related to Apoc. 12 it will have to be on the basis of Plutarch's account. Yet the differences between the two are substantial. There is in Plutarch no story of the birth of Horus, Typhon does not pursue either Isis or Horus--rather he looks for the body of Osiris, and there is nothing in Apoc. 12 which is similar to the role of Osiris. At first glance, Typhon brought in chains and released and battled again seems quite similar to Apoc. 20 in which Satan is loosed from his chains for a thousand years. But the differences are again more startling than the similarities: the anger of Horus, his attack on Isis, and, in Apoc. 20, the final capture of Satan.

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[1] Conflict, p. 104.

[2] Ibid., p. 107.

[3] The summary is of On Isis and Osiris, 18-19, or 358A-E.

[4] Ibid., 359B, and 364B.

Other than this literature the only evidence from the Hellenistic era is the magical papyri. Griffiths points out the large place given Isis and her cult in these papyri. However, "neither in her cult nor in that of Sarapis. . .does Horus figure as the vanquisher of Seth."[1]

Summary. Two important observations can be made on all of the evidence from the Hellenistic, Greek-speaking world. (1) There is no story of the birth of Horus. Without such a story we cannot assume that the representations of Isis holding the child Horus imply any story of his birth. (2) The struggle of Horus with Typhon is always closely related to the figure of Osiris.[2] So while we are in no way lacking for material on the Isis cult, we have nothing that is comparable to Apoc. 12 with its birth and the absence of the father.

3. The Astral Forms

a. Isis as Virgo

We will consider the evidence assembled by Boll.[3] The oldest reference which he cites is the Catasterisms of Ps. Eratosthenes, Ch. 9. As we saw in the chapter of astral backgrounds, the connections of this collection of fragments with the Eratosthenes of the 3rd cent. B. C. is widely doubted and its date is also a matter of dispute. The earliest date which we can safely assign to it is the first century B. C.

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[1] Conflict, p. 117.

[2] Ibid., p. 85. Cf. Allo, Saint Jean, p. 189.

[3] Aus d. Off. Joh., pp. 109-10; Sphaera, pp. 208-10. My search through the C.C.A.G., vols. 8, 10, 11, and 12, all published after Boll's death, turned up nothing to support his argument, in the way of additional evidence.

The ninth chapter of the Catasterisms is the collection of passages dealing with the constellation Virgo which are attributed to Eratosthenes. As we observed earlier the editor assembles the passages and then deduces an "epitome" of the text as it might have appeared in the original. The two passages on which Robert bases the epitome in question are from Hyginus and the Scholia on Germanicus. The Scholia mention that Virgo is identified with Ceres, Atargatin, and Fortuna. Hyginus lists Ceres, Fortuna, and Erigone. From these two sources Robert infers an original which read, "Demeter, Isis, Atargatin, and Tyche."[1] There is not the slightest clue as to why Isis was added to the list when none of the sources included her. The most that we can say about Ps. Eratosthenes is that Robert thought he should have included Isis; this is hardly primary evidence for the identification of Isis with Virgo.[2]

In his discussion of Apoc. 12, Boll asserts that the identification of Isis with Virgo appears often and that he will give us only the main witnesses from the 1st cent. A.D.[3] He indicates that all the material on this connection is in his Sphaera. There we find only the reference to Teukros, already cited by Boll, which speaks of Virgo as Isis holding her child Horus. The process by which Boll

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[1]Robert, Eratosthenis, pp. 82-85.

[2]It should be noted that Boll is not alone in following Robert's conclusions. Drexler, "Isis" p. 436, also quotes this epitome as evidence for Isis's identification with Virgo.

[3]Aus d. Off. Joh., p. 109. He refers also to the Dendera zodiac. However, in his Sphaera, p. 210, he describes the place of Isis in the zodiac as a separate figure sitting at the feet of Virgo. This cannot serve as an identification of the two.

comes to attribute this passage to Teukros in the 1st cent. A. D. is not above suspicion. The passage is found in a 15th cent. MS in a passage covering seven pages attributed to Rhetorius (5th cent. A. D.). Rhetorius further attributes this section to one Teukros. In a separate MS. there is a second text, parallel to the first one; the difficulty is that there is in this second text no mention of any Teukros--only Rhetorius. Boll shows that the longitude of the stars according to both texts fit the year 510 A.D. There are, however, some other differences in the two MS's: the one attributed to Teukros has some mistakes which are not in the one bearing only the name of Rhetorius. Boll concludes from these facts that Rhetorius took over a passage from Teukros and reworked it. One further text, from the 12th cent., is discussed which makes the same mistakes as the text carrying the name of Teukros. From this third text Boll concludes further that the Teukros text is the earliest and that the mistakes in it, which would have been obvious to Rhetorius, crept in through errors of transmission.[1]

There is another, more plausible explanation for the connections of these texts, an explanation which Boll seems not to have considered. It seems likely that the text attributed to Rhetorius alone, since it contains the least number of mistakes, is closest to the original and also to Rhetorius. The Teukros text and the one from the 12th cent. are more easily understood as corruptions of the original, since they contain the same mistakes. The addition of the name of Teukros is understandable as an attempt to give the text a greater antiquity. The longitudes,

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[1] Sphaera, pp. 1-16, 208.

all correct for 510 A.D., argue against any earlier date for the text. So we have no more than an early 6th cent. witness to an identification of Isis with Virgo.

These two texts, Eratosthenes and Rhetorius-Teukros, are the only ones in which Boll shows an identification of Isis with Virgo.[1] Further, Boll's argument that the dragon Typhon is localized in the heavens is made less impressive by the fact that it is localized in the Greater or Lesser Bear.[2] Boll shows no evidence that Typhon was placed elsewhere in the heavens, so his argument that Typhon was probably given different locales in the sky because Isis was given such is not persuasive.

b. Isis in Other Celestial Forms

There remains some evidence coming from the first and second centuries A.D. tying Isis to other parts of the heavens but not to Virgo. This evidence consists of the Isis-aretologies (the hymn from Andros and the aretology from Ios) and the Metamorphoses of Apuleius.

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[1] In the Hermetic tractate, or portion of a tractate, Kore Kosmou, Isis is identified, says Boll, as the "Virgin of the World" and also the mother of Horus. This step, he argues, made all the easier the identification of Isis with Virgo in Hellenistic syncretism (Aus d. Off. Joh. p. 112). The date of the Kore Kosmou is not at all certain. Nilsson, for instance, sets the earliest part of the hermetic corpus, which does not include K.K., in the 2nd cent. A.D. at the earliest. (Gesch. d. gr. Rel. II, p. 585) The translation of "Kore Kosmou" as "Virgin of the World" is also disputed. Festugière argues for either "Eye of the World" or "Woman of the World" but against the translation "Virgin" because Isis is never portrayed as a young woman; rather as the mother of Horus and wife of Osiris. (Corpus Hermeticum, trans; and ed. by A.-J. Festugière (Vol. III; Paris: Société D'Edition "Les Belles Lettres", 1954) p. cxxviii). So this reference to K.K. is no evidence for a connection of Isis with Virgo in the Hellenistic world.

[2] Off. Joh., pp. 110-11. Sphaera, p. 162.

The Isis hymn from Andros is dated by Peek as from the 1st cent. A.D. Line 23 of the hymn has the words astrophorois lampō with the rest of the line corrupt or missing. Peek has restored this so that it translates, "Mit den sterntragenden Kreisen laufend leuchte ich im Hundstern."[1]

The Isis aretologies from Cyme in Asia Minor and from Ios are almost parallel and come from the 2nd cent. A.D. The first of the following lines is omitted in the inscription from Ios, but the others are found in both.

	Cyme	Ios	
Line	8	-	I am the mother of Horus the King.
	9	6	I am she that riseth in the Dog Star.
	. . . . .		
	12	9	I divided the earth from the heavens.
	13	10	I showed (edeiksa) the path of the stars.
	14	11	I ordered the course of the sun and moon.[2]

Isis is here identified with Sirius, as is often the case. But beyond this she is described as the goddess of creation and not as the queen of heaven.[3]

The phrase "queen of heaven" (regina caeli) is applied to Isis in Apuleius's Metamorphoses XI. 2. This passage figures in the arguments of Boll and Drexler,[4] and is often discussed.[5]

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[1]Peek, Isishymnos, pp. 16, 38.

[2]Ibid., p. 122. Translation from F. C. Grant, ed., Hellenistic Religions, The Library of Religion, II (New York: The Liberal Arts Press, 1953), pp. 131-32.

[3]Against Drexler,"Isis", p. 433.

[4]Aus d. Off. Joh., p. 111. Drexler, "Isis", p. 433.

[5]Nilsson, Gesch. d. gr. Rel. II, p. 606. Erman, Rel. d. Aeg. pp. 432 ff.

The passage divides itself as follows:

XI.1 Setting of the vision: In a bright moonlit night Lucius, still in the form of an ass, awakens suddenly; he does a kind of cultic purification.

XI.2 Invocation of the goddess: he addresses her as regina caeli--whether Ceres or celestial Venus or Diana, sister of Apollo, or Prosperine--who is source of feminine light, giving changing light according to the positions of the sun; he pleads for deliverance.

XI.3 Epiphany: Lucius falls asleep, and the goddess appears rising out of the sea; she has a circlet in the middle of her forehead resembling the

XI.4 moon and it is supported by serpents; on her shining black coat there are stars and a full moon.

Speech of Isis:

Revelation: (in much the form of the aretologies)

She identifies herself as the "principal of them that dwell in heaven

XI.5 (prima caelitum)", among many other claims, then lists the names by which she is known in various lands; she then reveals that her true name is Queen Isis.

XI.6 Promise: Lucius will be delivered by being restored to human form in the course of a feast day for Isis; he will worship her in Hades, and, if Lucius is diligent, she may lengthen the time given him by Fate.

XI.7 Conclusion: Isis vanishes, and Lucius awakens and rejoices; Isis is referred to as "matrem siderum. . .orbisque totius dominam". The

promise is fulfilled as the story proceeds, and Lucius is transformed in the middle of a procession of a cultic festival.

From this account of Apuleius, Isis is seen as closely connected with the moon (XI. 1-4) and also as the one who presides over the heavens (XI.4,7). There is no mention of her having created the heavens so that she is a queen of heaven in the same manner as the woman in Apoc. 12. This is the only place which I can find that Isis is a queen of heaven. Her identification with Sirius, as in the aretologies, and the moon are quite frequent.[1]

Now we must come to an overall assessment of this evidence. Boll wrote that the factor which led him to decide for Isis and Horus over Leto and Apollo was that Isis was identified with Virgo and Leto was not.[2] This assertion has not stood up under examination. What we do have left after this examination is the frequent identification of Isis with the moon and Sirius and one instance of her being the queen of heaven. The goddess Leto, while showing some astral connections, cannot offer the abundance of such connections which Isis offers. How much preference we should give to the Isis myth as a source of Apoc. 12 because of this abundance is not entirely clear. If John used the Isis-Horus myth, then we must suppose that he, or his source, knew of the connection to the moon and/or Sirius and changed the connection to Virgo; there is no evidence to support any other supposition. Likewise Typhon was changed from the Bears to Hydra. Would

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[1] Drexler, "Isis", pp. 434-38.

[2] Aus d. Off. Joh., p. 109.

these changes have been a less difficult step than that of assigning Leto and Python to the two constellations? It seems to me that if it was less difficult then it was not by much, and so we cannot use this astral evidence to give much preference to the Isis-Horus myth. It is to be used as one piece of evidence not more important than several others.

This limited connection to the astral world is not sufficient evidence to overcome the difficulties discussed earlier: the absence of the birth of Horus in the Hellenistic era and the active involvement of Osiris in the story of the dragon battle. It is therefore improbable that John made use of any of the myths connected with Isis or Horus in the Hellenistic period.

CHAPTER SIX

THE CAESAR CULT

I. The Caesar Cult and the Apocalypse

In the last two hundred years, the Apocalypse has not lacked interpreters who saw in it a struggle against the claims of Roman emperors to be gods and worthy of worship.[1] Even Gunkel, who objected strongly to the contemporary-historical method of interpretation, recognized chapters 13 and 17 as references to Rome.[2] The only significant opposition has come from Ernst Lohmeyer,[3] and his arguments have been countered successfully, to my mind, by Lyder Brun and Roland Schuetz.[4]

II. The Caesar Cult and Apocalypse 12

A. The Goddess Roma

G. B. Caird suggests that the queen of heaven in Rev. 12 was inspired by the goddess Roma, or, more precisely, Roma is portrayed as the great harlot of

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[1] See Bousset, Off. Joh., pp. 102 ff.

[2] Schoepfung und Chaos, p. 320.

[3] Off. Joh., pp. 113 ff.

[4] Brun, "Die roemischen Kaiser in der Apokalypse", ZNW 26 (1927), pp. 128-151; Schuetz, Die Offenbarung Johannis und Kaiser Domitian (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1933).

Rev. 17 and the woman in chapter 12 is the true queen of heaven instead of Roma.[1] Caird is on good grounds in asserting that Roma was worshipped in Asia Minor,[2] but he is unable to cite one instance of Roma in conjunction with a dragon and child. I am his equal in this inability. As a result of this lack we must dismiss the goddess Roma as the inspiration for the complex of images in Rev. 12. It is still possible, even probable, that she is behind the portrait of the harlot in Apoc. 17.

B. Caesar as a God

Caird also suggests that the myth of the young god of light slaying the dragon of darkness was taken over by the Emperor so that Caesar assumed the role of Apollo himself. Caird's only evidence for this is a vague reference to coins with the Emperor's head irradiate.[3] This is scarcely enough to support his conclusion, but the proposal is interesting enough to see if we can find more evidence.

The development of the Caesar cult starts innocently from the refusal of Augustus to be worshipped and grows to Domitian's being addressed and "Lord and God".[4] Along the way three of the emperors either identified or allied himself

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[1]Caird, A Commentary on the Revelation of St. John the Divine, Black's New Testament Commentaries (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1966), p. 148.

[2]David Magie, Roman Rule in Asia Minor (2 vols.; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950), p. 471.

[3]Caird, Commentary, p. 148.

[4]Suetonius, Augustus, 52, and Domitian 13,2: Cassius Dio 67, 4, 7. Helpful accounts of the development of the Caesar cult are those by David Magie, Roman Rule in Asia Minor; A.D. Nock, "Religious Development from the Close of the Republic to the Death of Nero", Cambridge Ancient History, vol. X (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952), pp. 465-511; Kurt Latte, Roemische Religionsgeschichte, Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft V, 4 (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1960), pp. 312 ff; and W. Drexler, "Kaiserkultus", in Roscher, Lexikon II, 1, pp. 901-919.

with a particular god. Caligula called himself Jupiter Latiaris,[1] had the head of a statue of Jupiter replaced with the likeness of his own,[2] paraded in the dress of several gods, including Venus and Jupiter,[3] and people spoke and wrote of him as "Jupiter" and "God".[4]

Domitian is also closely allied with Jupiter,[5] but there is no evidence that he identified himself with the god.

The case of Nero is at least as clear an identification as that of Caligula; the difference is that Nero presented himself as Apollo. Tacitus has disparaging remarks about Nero's playing the lyre under the appearance of Apollo.[6] Suetonius tells of Nero's returning from Greece with the Pythian crown and having statues and coins produced with himself as lyre-player. This seems to be something more than a musician's vanity; the procession went straight to the temple of Apollo for celebrations.[7] Cassius Dio tells of the cries that greeted Nero on two separate arrivals. In the first one there were, he reports, hired cheerleaders. "Glorious

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[1]Cassius Dio 59, 28, 5.

[2]Suetonius, Gaius, 22.

[3]Ibid., 52.

[4]Cassius Dio 59, 30, 1.

[5]Suetonius, Domitian, 4, 13; Tacitus, History, 3, 74; Martial 8, 24 and 9, 18, 8.

[6]Annals 14, 14.

[7]Nero, 25. On Apollo as a lyre player, see the articles on "Apollon" by Wernicke, in Pauly-W., vol. 2, pp. 1-111; and by Roscher in his Lexikon, 1, 1, pp. 422-449.

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Caesar! Our Apollo, our Augustus, another Pythian. . ."[1] "Hail Olympian Victor! Augustus! Augustus! Hail to Nero our Hercules! Hail to Nero our Apollo!" As is this second recital might be suspected of exaggeration, the author adds, "I might. . .have used circumlocutions, but why not declare their very words?"[2]

Nock writes that Nero had a colossus of the sun constructed with his own likeness in front of it, and that he had his own head irradiate placed on coins.[3] The British Museum has one coin from Sardis with Apollo and Nero on opposite sides.[4] The same opposition, but with Apollo's holding a lyre, is reproduced by Michael Grant.[5] This is hardly an exhaustive list of coins, but it provides some evidence to corroborate the literary accounts of Nero's having identified himself with Apollo.

C. Nero and the Apocalypse

It is of no help in understanding Rev. 12 to show that Caligula and Domitian were closely associated with Jupiter; there is no evidence for any myth

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[1]Cassius Dio 62, 20, 5.

[2]Ibid., 63, 20, 5. These translations are taken from Dio's Roman History, The Loeb Classical Library, vol. 8, trans. by E. Cary (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1925), pp. 81, 168-71.

[3]"Religious Development", p. 501.

[4]Head, Catalogue of the Greek Coins in the British Museum: Lydia, p. 244 #63.

[5]Roman Imperial Money (London: Thomas Nelson & Sons, Ltd., 1954), plate XIV, 5.

like the one in Apoc. 12 involving Jupiter. However, Nero's identification with Apollo could be of substantial help since we have seen that the Leto-Apollo-Python myth has many similarities to Rev. 12. This could possibly supply a reason why John might have made use of this Apollo myth. The difficulty with this connection of Nero to Apollo is that the Apoc. was written under Domitian, and so we must wonder why the author would still be concerned with the figure of Nero.

A possible solution to this difficulty is found in the expectation that Nero would return. Because of his somewhat mysterious death, after the Senate had proclaimed him a public enemy, there were rumors that he would return from the East, from Parthia, to make war on Rome and to regain his throne.[1] By the second century A.D. Nero had become identified in Jewish and Christian writings with Beliar and the Antichrist.[2]

Within the Apocalypse, references to the return of Nero are found by some scholars in chapters 13 and 17.[3] Minear raises proper objections to its presence in Rev. 13. The wound to one of the heads of the beast is also a wound to the beast itself (13:12,14), so there is no distinction between the Empire, the beast, and the Emperor who received the wound. Such a distinction is necessary because

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[1]Descriptions of this expectation are found in Charles, Rev. II, pp. 80 ff.; Bousset, Off. Joh., 374 ff.; and Paul S. Minear, I Saw a New Earth (Washington: Corpus Books, 1968), pp. 248 ff. Primary evidence is in Suetonius, Nero, 57; Tacitus, History 2:8 ff.; and Cassius Dio 66 19,3.

[2]Sibyl. V: 28 ff., and Ascension of Isaiah 4:2-4.

[3]Charles, Rev. II, pp. 80 ff.

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Nero's departure and especially his expected return were as an enemy and not an ally of Rome.[1]

The same objection by Minear does not hold up when applied to Rev. 17, because it contains a distinction, even a contradiction, within the description of the beast. In 17:3,9-10, the great harlot sits on the seven heads of the beast, the heads representing both seven hills and seven kings. In 17:11-18, the beast, who has now become an eighth who was one of the seven, no longer supports the woman, but, along with ten kings, hates the harlot and destroys her. All of this becomes a bit clearer when we recall that Nero was one of the emperors and thus part of the support of Babylon-Rome, the great harlot; he was also expected to return as the enemy of the same. Minear writes that the eighth who also belonged to the seven cannot refer to a series of emperors--it is "an arithmetical and a chronological impossibility." He raises the further question, "What can it mean to speak of these Roman emperors as hating the harlot (17:16), if the harlot represents their capital city or their empire?"[2] We have seen that it could well mean that Nero is returning to revenge himself on Roma; that Nero should be opposed to a woman and kill her fits nicely with his infamous matricide. In this context, the eighth who was one of the seven is neither an arithmetical nor a chronological impossibility.

So it seems clear that John, in chapter 17, was making use of the belief in the return of Nero. Now we can ask about the possible inter-relationship

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[1] New Earth, pp. 251-52.

[2] Ibid., p. 239.

of three observations made to this point: (1) it is possible that John used the Apollo myth in Rev. 12, (2) Nero identified himself with Apollo, and now (3) John knew and used the belief that Nero would return. We have no outside evidence that Nero's return was ever connected with his claim to be Apollo, but I believe that there are clues to that effect within the Apocalypse.

Chapters 12 and 17 are closely related, both containing a woman and a beast.[1] We might expect that the two complexes are inter-related. I suggest that the relation is as follows: the identification of Nero with the beast in Rev. 17 provides one part of the basis required to understand John's use of the Apollo myth in Rev. 12. The other part of that basis is that, as we pointed out, Nero claims for himself the role of Apollo over against the dragon; this together with the identification of Nero as the beast in Rev. 17 provides the juxtaposition which could have led John to transform the Apollo myth: Nero is made a part of the dragon and denied the role of Apollo which he claimed for himself. In other words, in considering the possible take-over of the Apollo-Python myth, one question has to be: how did John come to dislodge Nero from the role of Apollo? The identification of Nero with the beast in Rev. 17 provides the answer.

The suggested connection between the returning Nero and Apollo possibly provided one other intermediary step towards John's transformation of the myth. Nero's opposition to Rome meant that in all probability Apollo had already been set in opposition to Rome. As a result, John had only to claim that the true

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[1] See Bornkamm, "Die Komposition der apokalyptischen Visionen", in Gesammelte Aufsaetze, II, p. 206.

opponent of Rome was Christ and that Nero was no more than a part of the beast-empire. In Rev. 17, when Nero slays Babylon-Rome, he is still an extension of the beast; so in a similar fashion, Nero is included under the dragon of Rev. 12 who turns his authority over to the beast.

Also, the women in Rev. 12 and 17 are the anti-types of each other.[1] While the dragon in Rev. 12 pursues the woman, he is unsuccessful in his attempt to destroy her. By contrast, the beast in Rev. 17 does succeed in destroying the great harlot.

This connection to the returning Nero gives us a possible understanding of why John might have used the myth of Apollo's birth and dragon-battle. While the occasion of the writing of the Apoc. was the persecution by Domitian, John plainly expected a more severe trial in the future (e.g. 17:10-14), and that trial was connected with the return of Nero. The myth of the birth of Apollo-Nero, and perhaps his return to slay the dragon, is taken over and turned upsidedown: the true Apollo, the true hope, is Christ, and the claims of the Empire and the coming Nero are exposed as the work of Satan.

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[1] Cf. Caird, Commentary, p. 148.

CHAPTER SEVEN

GNOSTICISM

I. The Mandaean Book of John

A. Lohmeyer's Suggestion

Lohmeyer argues that much of Rev. 12 can be explained from the influence of a widespread, international myth of the divine child.[1] As a part of the evidence for this myth he offers the Mandaean literature, particularly the Book of John, and finds there several similarities to Rev. 12.

The taking up of the Messiah is paralleled by a story of Anos-Uthra taking Johanā away from the persecution of the Jews to the white mountain, Parwan. Johanā's return from the mountain to Jerusalem is with clouds, and this is perhaps where the Apoc. gets its notion of the Son of Man coming on clouds. The eagle of Rev. 12 is said to be analogous to the eagle as symbol of the redeemer in the Mandaean Book of John. Also, the hidden Messiah, i.e. one who comes without the world's knowing about it, finds its clearest expression in the Mandaean works as well. Lohmeyer points out correctly that while this hidden Messiah is present in the Gospel of John and elsewhere in the NT, the hiddenness plays no part in Rev. 12. His explanation for the absence of this motif -- that Rev. 12 gives the future,

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[1] See the discussion of this suggestion in Chapter 9 under Hellenistic Syncretism.

eschatological counterpart to the historical birth of Christ -- I cannot accept, but we will discuss that aspect in the Appendix.[1]

Lohmeyer does not assert that there was any literary or historical dependence of the Apoc. on the Mandaean literature or vice versa. The phrases describing the relation between the two are much more guarded, and it seems that they are parallels, in some respects, which never touch.

B. An Assessment of the Suggestion

The guarded statements about the relation of the Apoc. to the Mandaean Book of John seem quite proper since the dating of the Mandaeans and their literature is difficult and unsettled. For Gnosticism in general, the agreement of the colloquium at Messina was that the systems which we call Gnosticism existed in the second century A.D., and before that there was either proto-Gnosticism or pre-Gnosticism.[2] This fits well with the conclusions of Rudolph on the origins of the Mandaeans in particular. The oldest evidence for Mandaeism is from the second century A.D. Although their literature was collected in Babylonia in the seventh and eighth centuries A.D., good arguments have been made that some of it predates the time of Mani (third century A.D.), and comes from the area of the Jordan

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[1] Ernst Lohmeyer, Die Offenbarung des Johannes. pp. 97-8, 107-109.

[2] Le Origini dello Gnosticismo, Studies in the History of Religions (Supplements to Numen) XII (Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1967), pp. xxvi-xxviii.

valley. One part of the Left Ginza goes back as far as the second century A.D.[1]

It is possible to argue that there was a form of Mandaeism in the first century A.D. However, if there was, we have no evidence about the form of its existence. Any argument explaining the NT on the basis of Mandaean beliefs must be buttressed by good reasons why the Mandaean text in question reflects the situation in the first century.

The Mandaean Book of John in particular does not show itself as one of the earliest parts of the literature; the Islamic influence is strong.[2] The passage describing the taking away of Johanā to the mountain Parwan (32, or 116-122) gives at least two indications of being late. First, of the double form of the name Jahjā-Johanā, the first part -- used throughout this passage -- is an Arabian form[3] and so reflects a late stage. Second, a description of Johanā's father in this passage compares him to an Arab who has lost his Kismet. In his translation of this passage, Lidzbarski comments that this reflects the Muslim belief in a fixed fate.[4]

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[1]Kurt Rudolph, Die Mandaeer. I. Prolegomena: Das Mandaeerproblem. Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments, N.F. 56 (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1960), pp. 23-7. See also Rudolph, "Probleme einer Entwicklungsgeschichte der mandeischen Religion", in Le Origini dello Gnosticismo, pp. 583-96; and George Widengren, "Die Mandaeer" in Handbuch der Orientalistik, Erste Abteilung: Der Nahe und der Mittlere Osten, 8. Band, 2. Abschnitt: Religionsgeschichte des Orients in der Zeit der Weltreligionen, ed. by B. Spuler (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1961), pp. 83-97.

[2]Rudolph, Mandaeerproblem, p. 27.

[3]Ibid., p. 70.

[4]Mark Lidzbarski, Das Johannesbuch der Mandaeer, 2. Teil: Einleitung, Uebersetzung, Kommentar (Giessen: Verlag von Alfred Toepelmann, 1915), p. 117.

The conclusion is unavoidable that this passage describing the taking away of Johanā to a mountain is quite a bit later than the Apoc. Since we are interested in traditions which could possibly have furnished John his imagery, this Mandaean story is ruled out. We could try to project backwards the earlier form of this story, but there is no grounds for such an exercise.

The story itself, even if it preceeded the Apoc., lacks several of the important and unexplained elements of Rev. 12: the dragon, the opposition of the dragon to the woman, and the flight of the woman. Also there is nothing in Rev. 12 to compare with the role of Anos-Uthra.

The other elements which Lohmeyer draws from the Book of John are even less likely to have influenced the Apoc. In the discussion of the Son of Man coming on clouds, he fails to mention Dan. 7:13 which makes any further explanation of the figure unnecessary. The eagle which Lohmeyer cites from the Mandaean tradition is in one place identified with Hibil-Ziwā, who is the warrior against the evil powers,[1] and in the other he attacks the Jews with his wings and throws them into the furthest depths of the waters.[2] In neither of these is there a rescue or a delivery by the eagle. In the latter of these two there is the presence of water as in Rev. 12; however the two waters serve opposite functions -- in the Mandaean text water is the instrument of the defeat of the enemy and in Rev. 12 it is a threat to the woman.

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[1] Pg. 73, Lidzbarski, p. 235. See also Widengren, "Die Mandaeer", p. 87.

[2] Pg. 35, Lidzbarski, p. 137.

Our conclusion must be that, because of the late date of the Mandaean texts in question as well as their dissimilarities with Rev. 12, the Mandaeans did not provide the source for the images in Rev. 12.

II. The Apocalypse of Adam from Nag Hammadi

A. Summary of the Suggestion by James M. Robinson

A suggestion much more tenable than that of Lohmeyer's was made by James M. Robinson in a speech; I am indebted to him for a copy of this speech which he has not published. Since it is not available I will give a longer summary of it than I have given of other works.

Robinson is primarily concerned to offer evidence that the Gnostic redeemer myth existed in a pre-Christian form. The two pieces of evidence discussed are the Letter of Eugnostos the Blessed and the Apocalypse of Adam, both from Nag Hammadi. Of the two, the Apocalypse of Adam (Ap. Adam) is the clearer case of a pre-Christian document.[1]

The part of the Ap. Adam of particular interest is the series of thirteen sayings about the coming of the Illuminator (phōstēr). There are common points in these sayings from which Robinson constructs the outline for all of them. There are nine items in his outline:

1. the quotation formula, "But the Nth kingdom says of him...";

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[1] The discussion of the Christian or non-Christian character of the work is reviewed by Robinson in "The Coptic Gnostic Library Today", New Testament Studies 14 (1967-68), pp. 377-78. The crucial arguments are that Ap. Adam shows no use of the NT and no evidence of being Christianized.

2. the coming of the Illuminator, "he came from...";
   among the options are as a prophet, a raindrop and a cloud;
3. lust as a part of the Illuminator's conception (often missing);
4. pregnancy of the woman (since every saying is not a birth saying, this is not always present);
5. the boy is born (again, not present in all);
6. the removal of the boy to a place; sometimes the place is not specified, but the phrase "in that place" indicates that this element was present;
7. the child is nourished;
8. "he received glory and power";
9. "and in this way he came upon the water"; this phrase may have a connection with baptism.

After the thirteen sayings following this outline, there is one more from the "generation without a king". In Robinson's words, it "is eschatologically oriented, and has to do more with the followers of the Illuminator than with the personage himself."

Robinson sees several similarities between this outline and the story in Rev. 12. The pregnancy of the woman is in both. Although the lust is not found in Rev. 12, he is still interested in drawing a connection by means of the battle relating to a virgin in the fourth saying--which Robinson describes twice as a "lusty campaign" -- and the battle in Rev. 12:7-9. Also in common is the birth of the boy and the removal to a high place as well as the nourishing. In the last

two he notes that the Ap. Adam and Rev. 12 diverge on which figure is involved: in Rev. it is the mother and in Ap. Adam it is the boy. The glorification of the Illuminator has a certain similarity to the rejoicing in Rev. 12:10 after Satan has been defeated by Michael.

Apart from the common outline, there are two elements found in particular sayings which are comparable to Rev. 12. Comparing Rev. 12:1 to the twelfth saying, "he came from the two Illuminators...", Robinson observes, "the Woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet represents in a way the two Illuminators, perhaps the two Luminaries of Genesis 1, the sun and the moon." The motif of the wings of the eagle in Rev. 12 is paralleled in the second saying, in which "a bird came, took the boy that was born, and led him to a high mountain".

One item in each of the sayings, the coming upon the waters, Robinson acknowledges to be absent in Rev. 12 yet he juxtaposes it to the stream of water from the mouth of the dragon.

From all of these, Robinson finds the strongest similarity in the common sequence at the core of the two stories: "pregnancy, birth, removal, and nourishing". He concludes that Rev. 12 and Ap. Adam do indeed "share a common tradition".

Robinson goes on to compare this common tradition with sections of the Gospel of the Hebrews and the baptism story in the Gospel of Mark. Since these are clearly Christian works and do not add to the understanding of the tradition we need not concern ourselves with them at this point.

B. The Sayings on the Illuminator

Robinson's argument for the common tradition behind Rev. 12 is quite strong, so that we must examine these thirteen sayings more closely. Starting from

the outline laid out by Robinson and then reading the sayings, one is not prepared for the variety found in the sayings. In only two of the thirteen are all of the nine elements present. And even in those two, the sixth and the ninth, the inclusion of all nine elements is achieved only by accepting the phrase, "in that place" as a reminiscence of the removal of the boy (item six in the outline). The reference to the removal of the child occurs in only five or, perhaps, six[1] of the thirteen. There is a place mentioned in some form, either "in that place", or "there", in all thirteen, but the place can refer to the place of birth (nos. 4,6, and 10) or the place of nourishment without reference to removal (no. 9).[2] The two sayings which have all the points in the outline certainly do not, for all their nine points, have much in common with Rev. 12. The sixth saying tells of the dew becoming flowers, a woman pregnant from lust after the flowers, and the child nourished by the angel of the Pantheon. The ninth saying tells that one of the Pierides[3] broke off from the other eight and became pregnant by lusting for herself and being bisexual.

There is further evidence of the variety. In four of the thirteen sayings there is neither pregnancy nor birth; the Illuminator just comes. In six of the thirteen there is no mother, and in only six of the thirteen is there both mother and

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[1] In nos. 2,3,5,7,9, and perhaps 11.

[2] In Rev. 12 the child is taken to heaven, and, if we are right (see Chap. 2), this removal is also his ascension and exaltation. In the Ap. Adam where the removal is mentioned, it is separate from and prior to the glorification. The glorification is rather connected to his return upon the waters.

[3] See H. J. Rose, A Handbook of Greek Mythology (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1959), pp. 174, 180.

child. The third point in Robinson's outline, the lust, is found in only four of the thirteen. This particular scarcity poses no problems for the comparison with Rev. 12 since there the lust is not mentioned either.

Boehlig gives a glimpse into the variety by his classification of the sayings according to the nature of the producer of the Illuminator:

Sayings 1-4: by men,

5-8: from physical-material objects,

9-11: by gods (acts of lust)

12-14: from higher natural and philosophical beings.[1]

With this kind of variety we must be cautious about extracting an outline. I would suggest the following adaptation of Robinson's scheme in which each point appears in at least nine of the thirteen sayings:

1. the quotation formula;
2. the coming of the Illuminator, his birth;
3. a place, either born in, taken to, or nourished in; the place may be the heaven, sea, desert, mountain, or a cave;
4. the child is nourished;
5. he receives glory and power;
6. and comes upon the water.

Since our more cautious outline shows only a minimal likeness to Rev. 12 (the birth of the child, a place, and the nourishing), we must look to the motifs in the

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[1] Alexander Boehlig and Pahor Labib, ed. and trans., Koptisch-Gnostische Apokalypsen aus Codex V von Nag Hammadi (Halle-Wittenberg: Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Martin-Luther-Universitaet, Sonderband, 1963), p. 92.

particular sayings which were similar to Rev. 12 in order to find what the common tradition of these sayings and Rev. 12 consists of.

It is questionable to conclude that the two Illuminators and the woman arrayed in the sun, moon and stars rest on a common tradition. The sun, moon, and twelve stars form an astral complex which belongs together and was available to John apart from the Gnostic tradition.[1]

The motifs of the bird as compared with the two wings of the great eagle and the water in both documents are such tenuous connections that they would be important only if a compelling comparison were established on other grounds.

It seems to me to be a questionable method of comparison to search through all thirteen sayings in order to assemble one story made up of parts that match with Rev. 12. However, even the shopping through all thirteen does not produce an impressive similarity.

There is yet one other possibility for a tradition which influenced the Apoc., and that is that one particular saying represents that tradition and is very close to the sequence of Rev. 12. As we saw in the chapter on the Jewish background, the parts of Rev. 12 needing explanation are the mother giving birth to the Messiah, the dragon pursuing the woman, the battle of Michael and the dragon, and the flight of the woman. Of these parts, the first is similar to several sayings, e.g. 3,4,9. The saying which seems closest to Rev. 12 in this regard in number three. I give the translation by Robinson, which is very like that of Boehlig:

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[1]See Chapter Three.

> The third kingdom says of him: He came from a virgin womb, was driven from his city, he and his mother, (and) lead to a desert place. He nourished himself there. He came, he received glory and power. And in this way he came upon the water. (Ap. Adam 78: 18-26)

This seems almost a compressed version of the Matthean account of the birth, flight to Egypt, baptism, and temptation, with the last two items transposed. Robinson finds the same tradition in the baptism story in Mark: receiving the glory by the voice from heaven, being driven into the wilderness, and having angels minister to him. In spite of all the similarities there is as little sign that the evangelists used the Ap. Adam as there is that the Ap. Adam used the Jesus story. There does seem to be the possibility of a tradition common to them all.

This third saying, and the tradition it represents, is much closer to these gospels than it is to Rev. 12, which has no mention of a virgin, no mention of being driven or led, and no mention of a city; in Rev. 12 the mother and child are not together, and the mother is nourished in the desert, not the child. The common factor is the sequence of birth, going to the desert, and being nourished. It is conceivable that John could have altered this tradition in order to have Jesus taken to heaven so that he might return again. In order to accomplish that, his mother, now as the Christian community, is the one who goes into the desert and is nourished -- and this is understood as a new Exodus. However, as we saw in the chapter on Jewish backgrounds, the motifs of the desert and the nourishing are already present in the Exodus traditions of the OT.

Perhaps even more important, even if we took this tradition as the explanation for the birth, the desert, and the nourishing, we would still have to find

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another explanation for the dragon, his pursuit of the woman, and his battle with a figure like Michael. So we are in a position, with regard to this third saying, of having a second explanation of a few motifs and no explanation for two very important characteristics of Rev. 12.

In the fourth saying there is a battle of Solomon's forces against an enemy; however that enemy is not a dragon. It is Solomon's army which pursues one virgin and is given another. Solomon, through this virgin, then becomes the father of the Illuminator. There is no figure in this saying analogous to the dragon and nothing comparable to the battle with the dragon.

Only in the seventh saying is there a dragon mentioned. It is in the cave of the dragon that a raindrop becomes a boy who is then taken on high. In this saying there is no birth, no woman, and, in fact, nothing to indicate that the dragon is considered an evil creature.

I am not entirely convinced that the Apocalypse of Adam is pre-Christian or free from Christian influence. As we have seen, however, it is not necessary to go into that argument in order to show that the Apocalypse of Adam had no influence on the Apocalypse.

Summary

1. Those elements of the outline of the sayings which are in common with Rev. 12 -- the birth of a boy to a woman, the place, and the nourishment, found most clearly in the third saying -- already have an explanation in the OT which should be given preference.

2. There is no explanation in the thirteen sayings for the dragon in pursuit of the woman or his battle with Michael.

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CHAPTER EIGHT

SIX ASSORTED SUGGESTIONS

These six suggestions are grouped together not because of any relation of one to another, nor because they are necessarily inferior to the previous suggestions, but because they can all be dealt with in a brief space.

I. Iranian Mythology

Daniel Voelter argued that Apoc. 12 was formed from Micah 4 and 5 along with Persian mythology and perhaps a few minor motifs taken from the myth of the birth of Apollo. The Persian myth in question, found in the Avesta, Yasht 19, tells of "the great kingly glory", for which Ahriman and Ormuzd compete, as a personified heavenly figure like that of the woman in Apoc. 12. Ahriman sends the dragon Azhi Dahāka to pursue the glory; this dragon has three heads and six eyes. The twelve stars of the woman and the seven heads of the dragon are rooted also in the Persian myth: in the struggle between Ormuzd and Ahriman, the former produced the twelve signs of the zodiac and the latter created the seven planets. The story continues with the glory fleeing from the dragon to the Sea Vourakasha where she find protection in the water spirit. She escapes from there to come to rest on the kings of Iran.

Voelter admits that there is no mention here of the pregnancy of the woman, the birth of a son, or of the taking away of the child; he asserts that these elements come from Micah 4:8-10.

The mention of the dragon's knocking down one-third of the stars from heaven comes from an event described in the Bundahish 3:11 in which the evil spirit stands on one-third of the heavens and leaps onto the earth in the form of a serpent. The battle of Michael and the dragon also has parallels in the Persian material, the best one coming from Bundahish 3:26 where Angromainyu and his armies attack the heavens but are thrown back to the earth.[1]

There are some further details which are related to the Persian mythology, but the ones outlined here are Voelter's strongest arguments. Even so, many difficulties come immediately to mind. Nowhere is there any mention that the great kingly glory is personified as a woman. Also, Ormuzd plays a major role in the Persian myth, and there is no place for him in Apoc. 12. The glory flees to the Sea, and the Mother of the Messiah goes to the desert. The glory is finally identified with the kings of Iran, and the woman and her seed are persecuted by the authorities. Micah 4:8-10 does not clearly supply the child or his being taken up. So all that we have supplied for Apoc. 12 from this story of the heavenly glory is the dragon.

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[1]Daniel Voelter, Die Offenbarung Johannis neu untersucht und erlaeutert (Strassburg: J. H. Heitz(Heitz & Muendel) 1904), pp. 86-90.

The story of Michael and the dragon in battle is explained by Voelter in terms of the Jewish tradition -- Daniel 8, 10, and 12; I Enoch 9, 10, and 60.[1] Whether or not this Jewish tradition was taken over from the Persian is not our question. Our concern is to describe the form in which John found these images, and the decision must be in favor of the Jewish forms as in Daniel and I Enoch.

The problems of dating the Persian sources must affect our assessment of this suggestion. The Avesta, the latest portions of which come from the third century B.C., is the only native source which can be dated before the time of the Apoc. The period between ca. 300 B.C. and the Sassanian Empire in the third century A.D. yields no native evidence. For this period in between we are dependent on the Greek sources -- principally Strabo and Plutarch.[2] The dragon is present within the Avesta, e.g., Yasht 5:29 and 19:46 ff; the story of his jumping onto the earth, as well as that of the storming of the heavens, however, is from the period of the Sassanian Empire and cannot serve to explain the Apoc.

Even if we admit this later evidence, the judgement of Charles still stands: "So far the parallels are interesting, but of the woman with child, the birth of a son, his removal, the rescue of the mother, there is naturally not a word in Persian mythology."[3] The Greek and Latin witnesses to the Persian religion do not alter this conclusion.[4]

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[1] Off. Joh. pp. 80-81. However, see above, Chapter Two, part III.

[2] R.C. Zaehner, The Dawn and Twilight of Zoroastrianism (London: Weidenfeld and Nicloson, 1962), pp. 26-27.

[3] Charles, Rev., I, p. 311.

[4] The witnesses are collected and discussed by Joseph Bidez and Franz Cumont in Les Mages Hellénisés: Zoroastre, Ostanes, et Hystaspe, (2 vols; Paris: Société D'Edition "Les Belles Lettres", 1938).

Perhaps the most telling observation against the presence of Persian mythology is that the staunchest advocates of Persian influence in the Old and New Testaments have nothing to offer on Apoc. 12.[1]

The suggestion by Lohmeyer of a Mandaean background to Rev. 12 has been discussed in the chapter on Gnosticism.

II. Babylonian Mythology

A. Summary of Gunkel's Argument

The myth which Gunkel offers as the source for the imagery in Rev. 12 involves the mother, Damkina, the dragon, Tiamat, and the child and dragon-slayer, Marduk. The primary sources which Gunkel uses as evidence for this Babylonian myth are three: the oldest is in the Keil inscriptions, the second is in Eusebius who attributes this version to Berossus (third century B.C.), and the third is from Damascius

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[1] Wilhelm Bousset, who argues strongly for the influence of Persia on Jewish eschatology (Die Religion des Judentums in neutestamentlichen Zeitalter (2nd ed.; Berlin: Verlag von Reuther und Reichard, 1906), pp. 573-89), finds nothing to say on Apoc. 12 either in his arguments about Persian influence or in his discussion of the 12th chapter in his commentary (pp. 351-56).

Lawrence H. Mills goes through the Apoc. verse by verse looking for Persian motifs. In Apoc. 12 he points out the dragon Azhi Dahāka who had six heads, and he says that there is an eagle in the Avesta. But he makes no reference to the woman or the birth of the child. (Avesta Eschatology Compared with the Books of Daniel and Revelations (Chicago: The Open Court Publishing Company, 1908) pp. 32-3.) Lest you think this omission is from Mills' lack of trying to find parallels, I will quote one passage which illustrates his ability to find a Persian under every rug: "The four and twenty elders on thrones (Rev. 4:4) or round about the throne are exactly the Immortals in Venidād, though the number in Venidād is but a fourth of them." (p. 31)

See also Carl Schneider, Geistesgeschichte des Antiken Christentums I (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1954), p. 150, who sees Christ portrayed as a better Mithra, but has nothing on Apoc. 12.

(sixth century A.D.). The names of the mythical figures are different in each of these sources, and Gunkel assumes rather than demonstrates that the three are interconnected and so expressions of one myth.[1] Gunkel argues that he can reconstruct the myth which was used by the Jewish source behind Rev. 12 by using the three sources above and Rev. 12 itself. By means of this reconstruction method, he assembles a myth which is indeed very similar to Rev. 12.[2]

B. Criticism

The workings of this reconstruction method are quite mysterious. From the material with which he works he constructs a version of the myth which is like none of the sources. He has no evidence that the myth as he describes it ever existed.[3] Gunkel does not try to cover up what he is doing. He admits, for instance, that the Babylonian myth does not have in any of its versions a reference to the birth of the dragon-slayer. This need not disappoint us because this part was probably present in some other form of the myth, or so he asserts. He can also "suppose" that the Babylonian dragon was red, in absence of any evidence.[4] In a later book, he declares his freedom from any rules of evidence which might limit us

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[1] Schoepfung und Chaos, pp. 16 ff.

[2] Ibid., pp. vi, 273, 388. The last two pages contain his descriptions of what the reconstructed myth looked like.

[3] This criticism has been made by Wilhelm Bousset, The Antichrist Legend, trans. by A. H. Keane (London: Hutchison and Co., 1896), pp. 8, 13 ff; Pierre Prigent, Apocalypse 12, p. 123; and Charles, Rev. I, p. 311; also by several other scholars.

[4] Schoepfung und Chaos, p. 385.

only to those forms of the myth which are attested because a more important form of the myth might be unattested.[1]

One instance of the distortion which results from this method can be seen by reference to Heidel's comment on the Enuma Elish.

> No conclusive proof has yet been found for the idea that Ti'amat was a dragon or a similar being, while against it can be cited the testimony of Berossus and of Enuma elish to the effect that Ti'amat was a woman, the wife of Apsu, and the mother of the gods.[2]

It is clear that this method of reconstruction could be used to construct the wildest of fantasies; since it refuses to be bound by available evidence, the only restraint is the limit of one's imagination.

Using Gunkel's method of reconstruction it is impossible to decide between different myths which have been suggested as the source of the imagery in Rev. 12. This becomes apparent when he discusses the possibility that Egyptian, Iranian, and Greek mythologies may have played a part in that imagery. Gunkel says that it is unimportant as to which of these in particular is the source since they are all representatives of an ancient international myth. He will leave decisions about the particular myth for later students to split their skulls on ("Kopf zerbrechen").[3] However when he surrenders that task, he has given up the attempt to understand what

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[1] Zum religionsgeschichtlichen Verstaendnis des Neuen Testaments, p. 38.

[2] Alexander Heidel, The Babylonian Genesis (2d ed.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), p. 88.

[3] Zum religionsgeschichtlichen Verstaendnis, p. 55.

material the author of the Apoc. had before him and how he used it and transformed it. Gunkel had earlier laid out just such an attempt as his own purpose by saying that it is not enough to show the ultimate origin of a notion, but that we must show how an author has taken up and reshaped his material.[1] It seems that his method of reconstruction was not adequate for the task.

III. The Cult of Asclepius

Karl Heinrich Rengstorf attempts to trace the opposition of Christianity to the Asclepius cult back into the New Testament. He sees the conflict reflected mainly in the Johannine literature including the Apocalypse.

He touches on Apoc. 12 in his discussion of the serpent, which was the transmitter of healing and the sign usually connected with Asclepius. Pergamum, for instance, had the principal Asclepius sanctuary in Asia Minor, and the serpent was on its seal.

Rengstorf observes that the two names used for the serpent in Apoc. 12, drakōn and ophis, are the same two names used for the serpent of Asclepius. It is the alternation of these two names which he finds interesting, and from this he suggests that the wavering between the two in Apoc. 12 is due to the wavering in the language of the Asclepius cult.

He also argues that the connection made in Apoc. 12 between Satan and the Serpent as the beast of the underworld has never been properly explained. The explanation which he offers is that the serpent of the Asclepius cult was taken

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[1] Schoepfung und Chaos, p. vi.

as the rival of Christ, and since it was connected with the underworld within its own cult, this serpent provided the link between Satan and the serpent as the beast from the abyss. Indeed the "throne of Satan" in Pergamum (2:13) refers, according to Rengstorf, to the Asclepius sanctuary.[1]

There is nothing that Rengstorf cites from the Asclepius cult which explains the opposition of the woman and the dragon, the celestial nature of the figures, the birth of the child, or his being taken up to heaven -- all important parts of Apoc. 12. But beyond these omissions, Rengstorf's arguments are not very convincing on their own grounds. In a time when the church was persecuted by the Roman Empire, there is little reason for the church to cast the Asclepius serpent in the role of the arch-enemy. It is much more likely that the "throne of Satan" refers to the fact that there was both a temple to Augustus and Roma and also the headquarters for the Chief Priest of Asia in Pergamum.[2]

If the Asclepius serpent was not cast into the role of Satan then he could not serve as a bridge between the two traditions -- the one of Satan and the other of the dragon. The explanation given by Charles of the variation between drakōn and ophis as due to two traditions within Judaism, particularly Gen. 3:1 ff and I Enoch,[3] is much more satisfactory than the explanation offered by Rengstorf.

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[1]Rengstorf, Die Anfaenge der Auseinandersetzung zwischen Christusglaube und Asklepiosfroemmigkeit (Muenster: Verlag Aschendorf, 1953), pp. 24-27.

[2]Magie, Roman Rule, p. 448; Schuetz, "Kaiser Domitian", p. 18; Charles, Rev. I, p. 61.

[3]Charles, Rev. I, pp. 325-26.

Whatever the relation of the rest of the Johannine literature to Asclepius, there is no tie with Apocalypse 12 and none, so far as he has demonstrated, with the entire Apocalypse.

IV. The Samaritan Book of the Secrets of Moses

V. Burch has suggested that the apocalyptic tradition is explained best in terms of the Hurrian culture and that Apoc. 12 is properly understood on the background of The Samaritan Book of the Secrets of Moses. Gaster, in the book of the same name, dates this work in the third century B.C. In it the star of Israel was in the sky at Moses's birth, and when Moses was thrown into the river, it dried up.[1]

There is no celestial woman, no dragon, no war in heaven, but all of this does not deter Burch. It should have.

V. Canaanite Mythology

Another suggestion, this one made in a conversation with Victor R. Gold, is that the background of Apoc. 12 is found in the Canaanite mythology. This is a realm even further removed from my area of competence than those in the previous suggestions. As a consequence I will rely on the work on the goddess Anat by Arvid Kapelrud. In the Ras Shamra texts, Anat does slay a seven headed dragon. However the woman in Apoc. 12 does not fight, she flees. Also the only

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[1] V. Burch, Anthropology and the Apocalypse (London: Macmillan & Co., 1939), pp. 91. 101-5.

hint of a child born to Anat is that of a calf.[1] These two differences, the absence of a child and the violence of the woman, would be enough to cast doubt on the use of a myth current in the first century A.D. There is, however, no evidence which I can find of this goddess anywhere near the Hellenistic period. As a result we must rule out the use of Canaanite mythology.

VI. Hellenistic Syncretism

We have considered several suggested sources for the imagery of Apoc. 12. Faced with such a multitude of suggestions for the heritage of this imagery, the response of a large number of scholars has been to refuse to decide between them. There is usually an admission that there is a non-Jewish element in the chapter but a denial that we can be any more specific as to where it comes from. We will look at some of the reasons for this denial.

One reason, possessing a certain perverse logic, is that it is safer not to decide; trying to decide on one particular mythological background will most likely lead to an error.[2] Another reason puts a more positive face on the matter; in the syncretism of the Hellenistic world, the myth was available in the clothing

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[1] Arvid S. Kapelrud, The Violent Goddess. Anat in the Ras Shamra Texts (Oslo: Universitetsforlag, 1969), pp. 55-61; 42, 97-98. See also John Hastings Patton, Canaanite Parallels in the Book of Psalms (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1944), pp. 27 ff; and W. F. Albright, "Anath and the Dragon" Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research 84 (December, 1941), pp. 14-17. See above, Chapter 2, part II, B, 1.

[2] Traugott Holtz, Die Christologie der Apokalypse des Johannes., p. 89. He follows Ed. Meyer.

of several cultures. The decision between the various forms is not necessary. Pierre Prigent sees the coming of this opinion as a definite advance in the history of the exegesis of Apoc. 12. The elements of the myth of the infant saviour, which Prigent says is available in many forms, are as follows: a divine infant is expected, his mother giving birth, world wide dominion is promised the child after a variable period of time, and this implies a victory over the forces of evil.[1] A number of other authors stand in a similar position.[2]

A slightly different viewpoint is that offered by Lehmann-Nitsche and Rudolf Halver. Lehmann-Nitsche writes that the myth reflected in Apoc. 12 existed in China, Persia, Babylonia, Elam, and the southern part of North America because all of these peoples shared a common Weltbild. Halver works from the notions of Jung and Kerenyi to the effect that there are certain archetypal myths which express aspects of human experience and which appear in very similar forms in different

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[1]Prigent, Apocalypse 12: Histoire de l'Exegese., pp. 127-28. In the discussion of the myth of the infant saviour, Prigent follows Norden, Geburt des Kindes - Geschichte einer religioesen Idee (Stuttgart: B. G. Teubner, 1924). Norden however does not argue for several forms of the same myth existing side by side; instead he discusses a single line development in which the Egyptian Horus story was taken up in the Latin world, as in Virgil's Fourth Eclogue, and from there was made available to Christian authors such as John of the Apocalypse. (pp. 112-13)

[2]Charles, Rev. I, pp. 313-14; Carl Clemen, Primitive Christianity and its non-Jewish Sources, p. 305; Gunkel, Verstaendnis, p. 55; Martin Kiddle, The Revelation of St. John. Moffatt New Testament Commentary (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1940), p. 216; and, to a degree, Bousset, Off. Joh., p. 355.

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cultures. The myth of the dragon and the myth of the woman existed in Babylonia, Greece, Persia, Egypt, and Rome. Several of these forms were available to John and he probably used more than one.[1]

The distinction between the opinions of Halver and Lehmann-Nitsch on the one hand and of Prigent, Charles, et al, on the other is that the former seem to posit the parallel development of myths in separate cultures and then the eventual recognition of their similarities as the cultures meet; Prigent, et al, seem to allow for the myths to have existed in somewhat varied shapes and then changed, through the process of interacting on each other, to resemble each other so that the only major differences are in the names assigned to the principal figures. Both sides share the fundamental assumption that the forms of the myth are basically the same in the different cultures. If our study to this point has shown nothing else, it has shown that the myths take very different forms.[2]

In the case of the Apollo myth, the earliest forms showed two separate and unconnected myths -- the story of the birth was not related to the slaying of the dragon. In the instance of Babylonia, a myth like that in Apoc. 12 was the

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[1]Lehmann-Nitsche, "Der apok. Drache", pp. 220-22; Halver, Der Mythos im letzten Buch der Bibel. Eine Untersuchung der Bildersprache der Johannesapokalypse. Theologische Forschung 32 (Hamburg: Herbert Reich Evangelischer Verlag, 1964), pp. 103-6.

[2]These different forms do not disprove the existence of archetypes in the human psyche; it is plain that many cultures have women goddesses, dragons, and the birth of special children as significant and hopeful events. The very different forms of the myths do show that these archetypes are of no help in understanding the historical web from which John drew his imagery.

product of the myth-making powers of Hermann Gunkel; there is no record of a Babylonian version of the birth of a dragon slayer. In the Egyptian mythology there are so many varied forms of the Horus myth that it is impossible to pick out one basic form as the origin of the others; further, within the Hellenistic world we have no story of the birth of Horus. In the Persian myths there is neither mother nor child. The Canaanite has the woman and the dragon but no child. The Samaritan has the child but no woman or dragon. It requires considerable ingenuity to see in all of this an element shared by the religious thought of a world and an epoch (so Prigent) or an international myth (so Gunkel and Charles).

The struggle to work through the suggestions and to attempt to decide on the heritage of Apoc. 12 is difficult; anyone who has followed me this far can attest to that. It is clear however that it is not sufficient to sound retreat from the struggle by trumpeting 'syncretism'.

CHAPTER NINE

CONCLUSIONS

I. On Those Eliminated

About half of this work has been a process of elimination. For various reasons, such as the date of the evidence, the geographic distance of the evidence from Asia Minor, and the dissimilarity of the suggested sources to Rev. 12, all of the proposals have been eliminated except for the OT and Judaism, the myth of the birth of Apollo and his dragon-slaying, and, perhaps, the astral beliefs of the Hellenistic world. We have not proved, nor did we hope to prove, that all these suggestions eliminated could not conceivably have had an influence on Rev. 12; new evidence could be uncovered tomorrow which would show that the Gnostic myth of the redeemer or the Isis-Horus myth was present in Asia Minor in a way strikingly similar to Rev. 12. Instead of proof against all other contingencies, we have provided an assessment of probabilities on the various suggestions based on the evidence available.

For those in the future who want either to revive these suggestions or to propose new ones, we have done perhaps two things of service. We have tried to bring some methodological consistency into the assessment of the evidence. This offering in the area of methodology might at least provide a starting point for

discussions on the subject. Also, by specifying the ways in which the OT is used, we have narrowed the area of search as to type of extra-Jewish source to be looked for, and in the myth of Apollo's birth and dragon-slaying we have a standard or point of comparison against which any new evidence might be assessed.

II. The Absent Script

We have found that most of the language and the figures in Rev. 12 are not unusual in the OT and Jewish literature. The dragon, the Messiah as child, the woman as Israel, the figure of Michael, the enmity of the woman and serpent, and the motifs from the Exodus are all readily recognizable from the OT. We have found also, however, that the precise relation of these figures is not familiar and that their actions have no Jewish precedent. Israel as a woman does not give birth to the Messiah; Israel as a woman -- or the church as a woman -- is not elsewhere pursued by a dragon; Michael fights various forces, but never a dragon; and the woman and dragon do not appear as celestial figures.

The picture we get on the basis of the OT and Jewish background is that Rev. 12 is familiar yet seems odd in a way that is difficult to define. It is as if we were watching a play with characters thoroughly Jewish, dressed in Jewish clothes, and speaking a Jewish kind of Greek, yet the characters are doing things that are a bit different from anything we have seen the characters do before. The actors are Jewish, but the script is unprecedented. Or, to change the metaphor entirely, it is as if we were looking at a display of desert flowers and found one cluster arranged according to a Japanese style. The flowers are familiar and often used, but we have never seen them assembled in this way.

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To retreat from metaphors to the text, it is conceivable that the relations and actions of the figures in Rev. 12 are the product of John's imagination and creativity. It is also possible, however, that these relations and actions (the script and the arrangement) have been taken over deliberately from elsewhere and the actors given Jewish identities.

III. The Double Story

We have argued that John did take his script from elsewhere, and that, in particular, he took it from the myth of Apollo's birth and slaying of the dragon. The actions in this myth and the relation of Apollo to Leto and of Leto to the dragon provide the script whose figures are wrapped in Jewish clothing.

As we examine the interplay of the figures from the Apollo myth and their Jewish identities, we will not be able to separate out some phrases as clearly from the Greek myth and others as purely Jewish. We will have to deal instead with double references -- figures and actions which have precedent only in the Apollo myth yet are given Jewish characterisfics.

A. Woman and Child

The goddess Leto gives birth to the god Apollo; the father, in this case Zeus, has no part in the story. This kernel of action provided the impetus for John to connect the figure of Israel as a woman having birth pangs with that of the Messiah's birth; also it provides a scheme of a birth story without mention of the father. From the evidence -- we saw the currency of the figure of Apollo and of the myth of his birth in Asia Minor -- it is likely that John, by referring to a woman about to give birth and opposed by a dragon, intended his readers in Asia Minor to

recognize the figures of Leto, Apollo, and Python. No figure in Rev. 12 except the dragon is given any name, not even the Messiah. In this absence of almost all names, we should not be surprised that the references to the non-Jewish elements are not made explicit.

B. Woman and Dragon

Python pursues Leto both before and after the birth of Apollo. Based on this action, the dragon, identified as the serpent of Gen. 3 and Satan, is portrayed as pursuing the woman, identified as Israel or the Church. The woman's identity as Israel becomes clear as she flees to the desert. Her connection with the Church is apparent in v. 17.

The figures of the woman, the child, and the dragon all have a double reference, the one to the Apollo myth and the other to their Jewish identity. It is also possible that two motifs in the flight of the woman have a similar double reference to the new exodus as well as to the birth of Apollo. (1) The woman flees to a place prepared for her. This is, on the one hand, a reference to God's protection of Israel in the wilderness, and, on the other, it could refer to the island, whether Delos or Ortygia, which was supplied to Leto for hiding from the dragon while she gave birth. (2) The earth's swallowing the stream of water (v. 16) refers, on one side, to the drying up of the Red Sea, but perhaps also to the way in which the earth overcame the sea by sending up four pillars to support the island of Delos and prevent it from being submerged by the sea.[1] Neither of these last two possibilities is more than a guess; I do not know how to assess the probability that

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[1]Pindar, Processional Songs, 87-8, and Callimachus, Hymn IV, 35 ff.

such was the intention of the author. However, neither of them are necessary to the argument that John was giving a Jewish character to a Greek myth.

C. Michael and the Dragon

The unprepared entrance of Michael, and the way in which the dragon fight interrupts the flight of the woman make this part of Rev. 12 the most difficult of the chapter's puzzles. For the flow of the story, all that is necessary is that the dragon be put on the earth. This could have been accomplished, in the usual fashion of Jewish apocalyptic, by having God eject Satan. The battle of Michael and the dragon is unnecessary. The presence of this battle in Rev. 12 can be understood, I believe, only on the basis of two points.

(1) The inclusion of a dragon battle in Rev. 12 was required because the dragon battle was a major part of the Apollo myth. The other considerations about Michael may be important, but all of them together do not provide a convincing reason for the inclusion of the battle without the influence from the Apollo-Python battle. There are significant changes in the battle as it appears in Rev. 12: the warrior is not the child, and the dragon is not slain but only cast out. These changes can be understood on the basis of the second point.

(2) Michael, in Rev. 12, is a substitute for the Messiah child. This is plain when we compare vv. 7-8 with verse 11. In vv. 7-8 Michael and his angels are the victors, and in v.11 the dragon is conquered "through the blood of the Lamb" and the witness of his followers. It seems that Michael takes the place of Christ in the story. As we saw in the Introduction, the structure of the chapter shows a parallel between v. 5, the birth of the child to rule with an iron rod, and v.7, the battle of Michael with the dragon.

These two points help us to understand the presence of the dragon battle, but a question still remains as to why John should have substituted Michael for the Messiah. That Michael would be the natural substitute, should one be needed, is clear from our discussion in Chapter 2. The substitution is needed for two reasons. The first is that the only place where Christ does battle in the usual fashion is at the end of time against the two beasts (19:21). Since Christ is to be in that battle, the opponent of the dragon in Rev. 12 cannot yet be portrayed as Christ. Further, since the dragon still has a role to play, he cannot be destroyed as in the Apollo myth. So Michael does battle, since a battle is necessary, and the dragon is thrown to the earth. This is also made to serve the story line by accounting for the great wrath of the dragon after his fall (12:12).

The second reason for the substitution of Michael for Christ lies in the fact that in a unique fashion, Christ did win a victory, although not the ultimate one, over the dragon by dying and being exalted (12:5, 11). In such a cosmic picture as that in Rev. 12, a peculiar victory like that would seem difficult to represent. Dragons do not usually admit defeat because their opponent dies. So the victory of Michael over the dragon serves to catch up the unorthodox victory of Christ and give expression to it by a triumph in the customary sense.

The location of the dragon battle within the chapter makes sense also in this light. It occurs just after the Messiah is taken to heaven. Since the battle is to serve also to cause the dragon's presence and wrath on the earth, the woman's presence on the earth must be registered first, and this, in v.6, is the only thing coming between Christ's exaltation of the defeat of the dragon by Michael.

IV. Wrestling with the Unexplained

There is one aspect of Rev. 12 for which we have found no true equivalent: the celestial appearance of the woman and the dragon. Without hoping to explain the workings of the author's purposes as we did in the previous section, it is still possible that we can see one function which this feature performs in Rev. 12.

Within the Hellenistic world the starry sky was often the location of mythical happenings, as in the works of Aratos and Hyginus. The term 'mythical' in this context has two aspects: (1) the figures involved are super-human, and (2) the events have some extraordinary and determinative effect on the life on men. Because there is no reason to venture into the maze of definitions about the nature of myth, I will avoid the term and will use instead terms such as determinative, constitutive, or prototypical.[1]

In Rev. 12 we observe a movement from the events in heaven, to the action of these heavenly figures on the earth, and finally to the historical situation of the Church's persecution. This persecution of the Church is related to the attack of the dragon on the woman and child in a way that their suffering gives value to the suffering of the Church. Perhaps the astral appearance of the woman and the

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[1]Some of the contours of this maze can be seen in the works of Mircea Eliade, Myth and Reality, trans. by Willard R. Trask (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1963), pp. 1-20; The Sacred and the Profane, trans. by Willard R. Trask (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1961), pp. 95-9; Cosmos and History, trans. by Willard R. Trask (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1959. See also G. van der Leeuw, Religion in Essence and Manifestation, vol. 2, trans. by J. E. Turner (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1963), pp. 413-18; H. J. Rose, A Handbook of Greek Mythology, pp. 1-15; and John Macquarrie, The Scope of Demythologizing (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1966), pp. 198-216.

dragon is intended to make plain the constitutive or determinative influence of the events in Rev. 12 on the life of the Church. It should be noted, however, that the birth of Christ is not said to be a celestial affair; he is taken to heaven after the birth. The prototypical aspect of Rev. 12 is not the birth but the opposition of the dragon to the woman and child. This opposition is what gives the proper understanding to the continuing opposition between the Church and her enemies.

V. Apollo and Christ

There are two possible reasons for John's having chosen the myth of Apollo's birth and dragon-slaying as the vehicle for writing about the birth of Christ. One has to do with the expectation that Apollo should be the ruler in the coming Golden Age; this is reflected in Virgil's Fourth Eclogue. There is, however, little evidence for this belief in Asia Minor.

The second possibility has to do with the identification of Nero with Apollo, for which there is some evidence in Asia Minor in the first century A.D. Nevertheless, at this point we are moving away from assessment of probabilities based on evidence and into guesses about how some of the evidence might have been connected or related.

John expected the return of Nero and, probably, a more severe persecution under his rule. John takes over the mythology connected to this Nero and makes it work against him. The role of Apollo is claimed for Christ and the Empire (the beast in ch. 13) along with Nero (17:11 ff) are exposed as agents of Satan. The ruler to return and reign is not Nero but Christ.

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This kind of takeover of mythology, whether or not my suggestion about the identification of Apollo and Nero is acceptable, is a particular brand of apologetics. It is not a complete denial of the hopes associated with the mythology, it is rather adopting these hopes, adapting them, and claiming them for its own.

It is instructive to observe which aspects of the Christ event and which from the Apollo myth were altered in the process of adapting one to the other. While the other figures in the chapter all conform reasonably well to the Apollo myth, the figure of Apollo/Christ has some different configurations. The birth of the child is in common with both traditions; however the birth in Rev. 12 is on the earth even though the rest of the setting is in heaven. The death of Christ is not mentioned by John in connection with his birth and exaltation, but the "blood of the lamb" is the means of conquering the dragon. Apollo killed the dragon, but in Rev. 12, Christ does not do so -- he conquers by being slain. The fact that Michael substitutes for Christ and defeats the dragon does not undo this point, but lends emphasis to it. The exaltation of Christ (v.5) has no equivalent in the Apollo myth.

The three parts of the Christ event which are not eliminated in the adaptation are his birth, his death, and exaltation. This is consistent with the view of Christ in the rest of the Apocalypse, although this is the only passage in which the birth is mentioned.

The death of Christ, expressed as the "blood of the Lamb" or "the Lamb who was slain", plays a large role in the Apocalypse (5:6-14; 19:13). This death is the ground of Christ's exaltation. Psalm 2 is the vehicle for the expression of many of the exaltation motifs. Christ as the Son of God (Rev. 2:18) comes

perhaps from Psalm 2, especially since in the same passage, there is a quote from that Psalm (Rev. 2:26 f). The relation of Christ to God as Son to Father is found throughout the entire book. Christ's "rule with an iron rod" (Ps. 2:9) is picked up again as the exalted Christ returns (Rev. 19:15). Because this death is the ground of Christ's exaltation, John can refer to that death, and to the death of his witnesses, as a victory.[1]

Because Christ is a supernatural figure in other parts of the Apocalypse (ch. 5 and 19) and is related to the god Apollo in ch. 12, we might expect that he would be portrayed as a super-human in Rev. 12 also. However at the point where we might expect such a description, there is silence. John seems to avoid making the life of Jesus into a completely supernatural event. The determinative event for the existence of the Church was, at least in part, an event on the human and historical plane.

Yet it was this historical Christ event which was the first defeat of the powers of evil. It was this event which set in motion the other events which were sweeping up Christ's followers in a persecution. This same Christ, now exalted, is also the strength of the church in this attack, this new exodus. And this Christ will return, his exaltation over all powers made manifest, to defeat the powers of evil and to allow his church to share in the triumph.

VI. The Open End

On the basis of some of our observations, there are a few questions which open up. One set of four questions can be addressed to the world of scholarship on the Apocalypse for possible investigation. There are also two questions

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[1] On this Christology, see Holtz, Christologie, pp. 20-22,52 and 164.

which I would address to the church today, or, to state it more accurately, which this study has raised for me in an unavoidable manner.

A. On the Apocalypse

1. We have seen in Rev. 12 the close juxtaposition of events in heaven and on earth--the woman and dragon are in heaven, then the child is born on earth, then the woman flees to the wilderness. This needs to be set in relation to the events which occur, throughout the rest of the Apocalypse, in heaven or on earth. Is John's close juxtaposition of the two areas a part of his usual pattern, or is it an exception? In either case, can we determine a general relation of the earthly events to the heavenly? In Rev. 12, the heavenly events give the proper understanding and context to the situation on earth. Yet it is the earthly event of the death of Jesus which is the basis of Jesus' exaltation to heaven. Is either of these relationships the normative one? Or is there for John no distinction between heaven and earth as to which is the arena of the determinative and prototypical events?

2. Related to the first question is another which has to do with an aspect which has been called mythical. We saw that Satan was thrown down, according to Rev. 12, in connection with Christ's exaltation. Yet in Jewish literature, Satan was thrown down usually in connection with creation. Since, within the Apocalypse, Christ marked the beginning of the end time, is there a correspondence for John between the beginning of all time and the beginning of end time? If so, then does Christ also become a part of a kind of primordial history? In what ways does this "mythic" aspect of Christ's role affect John's view of Jesus as a figure in the recent history? Or is this seeming combination of the beginnings of end time and all time unique within the Apocalypse?

3. We have argued that John adapted a myth from the Hellenistic world to his faith which was formed within a Jewish heritage. We also saw that in Rev. 9, the appearance of the locusts is described in terms of Joel and in terms of the figure of a Centaur-Sagittarius. Are there other instances in the Apocalypse in which Jewish clothing hides patterns from the Hellenistic world? Is there any other appropriation of hopes from the non-Jewish world?

4. We have seen that in Rev. 12 the church is conceived of as undergoing a new exodus. Exodus motifs occur in a few other places (8; 15:2; 16). It seems to me that a closer investigation of John's understanding of the church might be fruitful if one asks how this exodus model has shaped his thinking. This might apply especially to the letters to the seven churches.

B. In General

1. In Rev. 12, John uses a model of relating his faith to a different culture which is different from the model which seems to me to be in favor at the moment. He does not jettison the language of his tradition and seize on the language of the strange culture to express the patterns of his faith. Instead he retains the language of his Jewish heritage and wraps it around Hellenistic hopes and images, adapting them to his faith. Perhaps we have here a Biblical precedent for the ancient and much maligned practice of taking a "pagan" tradition and baptizing it with only slight alteration. Can we accept this model as valid? How might it be used in our culture?

2. We have seen that John's concept of doing battle with the forces of evil involved a victory by dying. Neither Christ nor his followers were involved in doing

violence, but in the course of their obedience, they expected to be dealt with violently. Might this model of struggle by being willing to die provide us another option between a violent attack on evil and a passive resistance? Could not this model call for a much more active and committed involvement and allow for a wider range of creative action than does passive resistance?

APPENDIX

ON THE CHRONOLOGICAL DISORDER

We intend to make a suggestion on how to understand the chronological confusion found in the Apocalypse. One instance of this disorder we have found already within Rev. 12. There the time of Satan's power on earth, beginning with Christ's ascension and lasting until the End, is 1260 days or three and one-half years; yet this period of time had elapsed almost ten times between Christ's death and the writing of the Apocalypse.

Another example of the jumble of time is found in the descriptions of the ends of the world. (1) The first is in connection with the 6th and 7th seals (6:12-17; 8:1-5). (2) At the end of the seventh trumpet, the cry goes up, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ"(11:15). At this seventh trumpet, "the mystery of God...should be fulfilled" (10:7), and it is then that God's temple in heaven is opened and the ark of the covenant revealed (11:19). (3) The coming of the Son of Man is recounted (14:14-16), and the earth is harvested and gathered and thrown into the "great wine press of the wrath of God" (14:17-20). (4) At the seventh bowl or plague, the earthquake does away with all islands and mountains, even though men remain to curse God (16:17-21). (5) In ch. 19 the armies of the nations are defeated by the sword

from the mouth of the rider on the white horse. In ch. 20 the innummerable Gog and Magog are destroyed by fire from heaven; then comes the resurrection from the dead. And finally after everything has been destroyed several times, the New Jerusalem has descended, there is described a tree of life, "and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations" (22:2).

These five ends of the world do not present themselves as recapitulations of the same events; this is plain from the way in which the start of a new series opens on the basis of the end of the previous series (8:1-2; 17:1).[1] One example of this is found in Rev. 12. The last three of the series of seven trumpets are equated with three woes; the third woe should be the seventh trumpet (11:14 ff). Yet the seventh trumpet is blown, the mystery of God is fulfilled, and there is no third woe. Then comes ch. 12, and it seems that the third woe is intended to be the dragon's coming to the earth full of wrath (12:12). Also, as we have seen, this attack of the dragon is the first part of a series in which Satan gives his power over to the beasts which appear in ch. 13. This provides another example of a chronological disorganization. The second woe involves the destruction of the temple (11:1-14) and the third woe is occasioned by the birth and exaltation of Christ in ch. 12.

Perhaps the best evidence for the chronological confusion in the Apoc. is the attempts to explain it away by the commentators. Charles tries to arrange

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[1]For an interesting interpretation of this, see Austin Farrer, A Rebirth of Images p. 40.

the book into a progressive sequence, but to do this he has to eliminate several parts as being the work of an unbelievably stupid editor.[1] Some of the difficulties in making history to be the subject of the Apoc. are outlined nicely by Elisabeth Fiorenza. Her conclusion is that the Apoc. is arranged not according to time sequences but according to topics. It is typical of the difficulties which all commentators on the Apoc. face that her topical scheme has a large exception: at the end of the section dealing with "the community and its oppressors" (chapters 10:1-15:4) there comes the series of seven bowls (15:1-16:21); the seven bowls, however, deal with "the judgement on the cosmos" and thus should be under the section (4-10) which treats that subject; its proper place should be prior to, not after "the community and its oppressors".[2]

John Wick Bowman has an ingenious arrangement of the Apoc. into seven acts of seven schemes each. He accomplishes this by the device of a "stage setting" which can be almost any length; for instance the setting for Act II is two chapters long and that for Act IV is but one verse. Bowman's ingenuity is impressive, but there is little reason to believe that this structure was what John had in mind.[3]

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[1] Rev. I, pp. 1-lv.

[2] Elisabeth Fiorenza, "The eschatology and composition of the Apocalypse", Catholic Biblical Quarterly 30 (1968), pp. 537-69, especially p. 561.

[3] John Wick Bowman, The Drama of the Book of Revelation (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1955), pp. 7, 41 and 75.

The most helpful description of the sequences and similarities within the Apoc. is still that by Bornkamm. Following the seven seals, he lines out two series, the first beginning in 8:2 and the second in 15:1. In the first, there are many references which become clear only as they are picked up in the second series. In addition to the obvious similarities between the seven trumpets and the seven bowls, Bornkamm points out the parallel place and subject matter of the women in 12 and 17 and between the coming of the Son of Man in 14 and the Word of God in 19.[1]

This growing clarity observed by Bornkamm fits well with the growing intensity which is observed throughout the visions. This is easiest to observe in the three series of sevens. The seals tell of the destruction of one-fourth of the earth, the trumpets tell of the destruction of one-third of a number of things, and the bowls speak of no fractions but of the tribulations of all men.

None of these commentators take account of the clear and deliberate chronological references which do not fit into any kind of time sequence; these are not explained by a topical arrangement, by a scheme of seven acts, nor by the accurate observations of Bornkamm.

Lohmeyer has recognized some of the difficulties of the chronological ordering of the Apoc. His solution is to rely on a category of eschatological time within which past, present, and future are interchangeable. Thus the birth of the

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[1] Bornkamm, "Die Komposition der apokalyptischen Visionen in der Offenbarung Johannis", pp. 204-208. This parallel between the two women matches nicely with our suggestion of the woman in 17 as Roma, and the woman in 12 as the mother of Apollo-Nero.

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child in Rev. 12 is described as the eschatological counterpart of the historical birth of Christ; it is a timeless event.[1]

Lohmeyer's solution is not satisfactory first of all because, as Holtz points out, it is imposing a foreign category onto the book.[2] Also, Rissi has shown that the time of the end, the three and one-half times/ years or 42 months or 1260 days does begin at the historical point of the life and death of Jesus. By the use of these figures from the book of Daniel, this time of Satan's activity is given a chronological limit. For all the difficulties that this figure of three and one-half years raises, it does not lend itself to the removal of the categories of past and future; the end of the time of Satan is clearly within the events which must be labelled as future. The use of the life of Jesus as an historical reference-point, the use of the 3-1/2 years, and the phrases indicating temporal sequence[3] would be unnecessary and indeed unwanted according to Lohmeyer's explanation, and he does not take adequate account of them.

All of this review of the chronological tangle and the absence of any decent understanding or explanation has been in order to argue that perhaps the Apoc. was not written to be understood as chronology and to raise the possibility that all of this confusion is deliberate.

Why would John have deliberately structured such disorder? A possible answer to this lies in the development of early Christian eschatological hopes.

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[1] Lohmeyer, Off. Joh., pp. 109-10.

[2] Holtz, Christologie, pp. 96, 216.

[3] Such as meta tauta, 4:1; 7:9; 15:5; 18:1; 19:1.

Vielhauer describes a kind of development beginning from a simple concern with the Parousia and the events following it and leading to a "complete apocalyptic outline embracing the time from the present right to the end."[1] This shift is not presented as a single straight-line development; the hope for the imminent return lingers on and the tendency away from the expectation of the immediate Parousia and toward a scheduling of the events which must take place before the end occurs quite early within the NT.

In Luke's alteration of the Synoptic Apocalypse, room is made for the time of the Church, and the events before the end present the "following sequence: (1) the persecution of the community, (2) political and (3) cosmic catastrophes".[2] The author of 2 Thessalonians 2 uses the signs of the end in his argument that the end is not yet and is not imminent.[3] In 2 Peter, the eschatology "is no longer, as it was in primitive Christianity, the bond of unity holding the whole kerygma together; rather it has a relatively autonomous existence alongside the other articles of Christian dogma". By the application of a different concept of time -- "a thousand years as one day" (2 Peter 3:8) -- the author does manage "to relativize the delay

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[1]Philipp Vielhauer, "Apocalyptic in Early Christianity", in New Testament Apocrypha, ed. by Hennecke and Schneemelcher; English translation ed. by R. McL. Wilson; vol 2 (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1964), p. 610.

[2]Ibid., p. 620.

[3]Ibid., pp. 612-13.

of the Parousia. But...at the same time that very apocalyptic expectation which it is the writer's concern to defend is robbed of all meaning".[1]

The tendency toward separating the eschatology from the rest of belief and making it into a schedule of events to come reaches an early peak in Didache 16. "The text pictures nothing; rather everything is schematized. The author's main concern is evidently to give a general outline of the last things with distinct consciousness and clear arrangement."[2]

Vielhauer places the Apocalypse to John in the midst of his survey and recognizes that in it there is a new awakening of the imminent hope in spite of the delay of the second coming and in spite of the waning hope reflected in the NT. He finds the expectation of the end within the Apoc. "more intense than in the Synoptic Apocalypse of Mk. 13."[3] He does not ask, however, about the effect of this on John's chronology.

Within this overall sketch of the development of the eschatological hopes we can ask again about the chronological confusion within the Apoc. I suggest that the disorder was a deliberate tactic to fight against the tendency to reduce eschatology to a schedule. Over against this domesticated apocalyptic,

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[1] Ernst Kaesemann, "An Apologia for Primitive Christian Eschatology", in Essays on New Testament Themes, Studies in Biblical Theology, no. 41, trans. by W. J. Montague (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1964), pp. 185, 194. First appeared in Zeitschrift fuer Theologie und Kirche 49 (1952), pp. 272-96. Also in Exegetische Versuche und Besinnungen (4th ed.; Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1965), I, pp. 135-57.

[2] Vielhauer, Ibid., p. 629.

[3] Ibid., p. 624.

John wanted to light the fire again under the cold hope that Jesus' second coming was near. To do this he could scarcely have thrown out all the materials and traditions that had been domesticated; there was nothing else available with which to express the hope. Instead he seized on those traditions, arranged them in increasing intensity, and swirled them together so that the end is never out of sight and so that it is impossible to construct from his work a schedule of events to come. He wrote to offer hope, but that hope was not based on knowing what was coming next; the hope -- in the face of a threatening and wide-open future -- was that God would be with them and that they would be victors even though the victory might be won by dying.

The device of using chronological confusion is also known in contemporary literature, for instance, in Joseph Conrad and William Faulkner. There is a distinction between these works and the Apoc., however. In the contemporary works of Conrad and Faulkner we can see that the author had an order of events in mind and then deliberately obscured it. There is no evidence that John had in mind any such order for events to come. The confusion is not a device to prevent the readers from clinging onto an order or schedule which he understood, but it is an expression of his own agnosticism about what the future would bring.

This suggestion does not solve the problems of the structure of the Apoc. or propose another possible means of structure. This proposal could be taken up by any of the authors, except those who want to find a chronological scheme in the Apoc., and used to understand the chronological chaos which is not to be explained away.

There seems to me to be another impulse at work in the formation of the Apoc., an impulse that fits nicely with the suggested aim of creating an impossible time-puzzle. Bousset sensed the tendency: "it almost seems as though he intended, not simply to give a certain prediction, but rather to write a corpus apocalypticum, a collection of the apocalyptic material in the circulation at the time, and to organize it under a consistent viewpoint."[1] Apart from this tendency toward inclusiveness, I see no reason for John to have included the three series of sevens which cover much of the same ground.

The inclination to include everything available on a given subject, in almost encyclopedic fashion, can be seen in works contemporary with the Apoc. It is in operation, it seems, within Plutarch, On Isis and Osiris, as well as in Jewish apocalyptic, such as I Enoch. In the case of the Apoc. to John, the encyclopedic inclusiveness served him well since it enabled him to complicate the chronological confusion.

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[1] Bousset, Off. Joh., p. 141. My translation.

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